THE RELIGIOUS OTHER

Towards a Muslim Theology of Other Religions in a Post-Prophetic Age

Edited by

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

The Religious Other

Faced with the fact that there are diverse religions which apparently exclude each other most of the people tend to think that one religion is right and that all the others are false; others conclude that all are false. "It is as if," Schuon remarked, "faced with the discovery of other solar systems, some maintained that there is only one sun, ours, while others, seeing that our sun is not unique, denied that it is a sun, and concluded that there is no sun...."

The articles collected in this volume articulate an other perspective and try to argue for a third possibility-that all religions are right, not in their dogmatic exclusivism, but their unanimous inner meaning, which coincides with pure metaphysics, signifying "the totality of the primordial and universal truths- and therefore of the metaphysical axioms- whose formulation does not belong to any particular system."

Unlike many modern writers, the contributors of this anthology, while propounding a belief in a universal Truth, do not commit the error of drawing the conclusion that one can ignore or strip away the outward differences in the religions, so as to focus solely on their inner similarities. They reject this notion and instead demonstrate that the outward distinctness in the forms is necessary and providential.

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PREFACE

Faced with the daunting task of writing something for this anthology by the way of a preface I reached instinctively to my superiors and the following lines from the twentieth century metaphysician Frithjof Schuon came immediately to mind. Faced with the fact that there are diverse religions which apparently exclude each other most of the people tend to think that one religion is right and that all the others are false; others conclude that all are false. "It is as if," Schuon remarked, "faced with the discovery of other solar systems, some maintained that there is only one sun, ours, while others, seeing that our sun is not unique, denied that it is a sun, and concluded that there is no sun...."[1] This anthology tries to argue for a third possibility– that all religions are right, not in their dogmatic exclusivism, but their unanimous inner meaning, which coincides with pure metaphysics, signifying "the totality of the primordial and universal truths– and therefore of the metaphysical axioms– whose formulation does not belong to any particular system." Likewise one could speak of the *religio perennis,* "designating by this term the essence of every religion, that is, the essence of every form of worship, every form of prayer and every system of morality just as the *Sophia perennis* is the essence of all dogmas and all expressions of wisdom."

The analogy of the sun and the stars is encountered in the works of the greatest authorities of the Islamic tradition also, for example, Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī. Keeping in view the fact that the Qur'ān never criticizes the prophetic messages as such, though it often condemns misunderstandings or distortions by those who follow the prophets, one notes that Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī sometimes criticizes specific distortions or misunderstandings in the Qur'ānic vein, but he does not draw the conclusion that many Muslims have drawn— that the coming of Islam abrogated *(naskh)* previous revealed religions. Rather, he says, Islam is like the sun and other religions like the stars. Just as the stars remain when the sun rises, so also the other religions remain valid when Islam appears. One can add a point that perhaps Ibn 'Arabī would also accept: What appears as a sun from one point of view may be seen as a star from another point of view. Concerning abrogation, the Shaykh writes:

> All the revealed religions *[sharā'i']* are lights. Among these religions, the revealed religion of Muhammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun. Their being hidden is like the abrogation of the other revealed religions that takes place through Muhammad's revealed religion. Nevertheless, they do in fact exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized. This explains why we have been required in our all-inclusive religion to have faith in the truth of all the messengers and all the revealed religions. They are not rendered null *[bāṭil]* by abrogation— that is the opinion of the ignorant.[2]

To maintain the particular excellence of the Qur'ān and the superiority of Muhammad over all other prophets is not to deny the universal validity of revelation nor the necessity of revelation's appearing in particularized expressions.

Unlike many modern writers, the contributors of this anthology, while propounding a belief in a universal Truth, do not commit the error of drawing the conclusion that one can ignore or strip away the outward differences in the religions, so as to focus solely on their inner similarities. They reject this notion and instead demonstrate that the outward distinctness in the forms is necessary and providential. "[T]he divergence between religions is due not only to the incomprehension of men, it is also in the Revelations, thus in the Divine Will, and that is why there is a difference between exoterism and esoterism; the diverse dogmas contradict each other, not only in the minds of theologians, but also— and *a priori*— in the Sacred Scriptures; yet God, in giving these Scriptures, gives at the same time the keys for understanding their underlying unity. If all men were metaphysicians and contemplatives, a single Revelation might suffice; but since that is not the way things are, the Absolute must reveal Itself in different ways, and the metaphysical viewpoints from which these Revelations derive— according to different causal explanations and different spiritual temperaments— cannot but contradict one another on the plane of forms, somewhat like geometrical figures contradict each other so long as one has not grasped their spatial and symbolic homogeneity.[3]

The sub-title of the anthology "*Towards a Muslim Theology of Other Religions in a Post-Prophetic Age*" underscores the importance of an other basic insight that informs the shared perspective of the authors. They are conscious of the fact that a religion's claim to unique efficacy must be allowed the status of half-truth because there is, in fact, in the vast majority of cases, no alternative choice. "In the past it would have been as pointless for a religion to dwell on the validity and efficacy of other religions as it would be for an announcement to be made from an all-capacious lifeboat to those struggling in the waters about it that five miles away there was an equally good lifeboat."[4] According to their lights, in the "Post-Prophetic Age" the conditions are different. "For those who come face to face with the founder of a new religion, the lack of alternative choice becomes as it were absolute in virtue of the correspondingly absolute greatness of the Divine Messenger himself. It is moreover at its outset, that is, during its brief moment of 'absoluteness', that the claims of a religion are for the most part formulated. But with the passage of time there is inevitably a certain levelling out between the new and the less new, the more so in that the less new may have special claims on certain people." Many of the selections included in the anthology address the implications— conceptual, theological, as well as practical and legal— of this "levelling out". It is the theological position that you take on the question of the religious and cultural Other that determines every thing else that follows, attitudes, behaviour, dealings; agendas relationships etc. It is not only an inter-faith issue; it has far reaching implications for intra-faith dialogue and relations. A person who has no place or tolerance for the religious and cultural Other in his perspective would naturally be expected to react in a similar manner when it comes to the dissident voices, difference of interpretation or diversity of opinions in ones own community!

The challenge is big; how to tread a third way between secular pluralism and religious exclusivism? to articulate an appropriate Muslim approach to the Other; to do so without undermining the integrity of the Islamic self-definition; and to do so in a manner that strengthens and complements all existing attempts to establish openness, tolerance, mutual respect and fruitful dialogue between believers in a world of religious plurality.

According to the lights of these authors, it is the perspective nurtured by Islamic spirituality that enables us to uphold the normativity of Islam without detriment to our universalism; and it is only true universalism that can generate "a transcendently ordained tolerance" which carries with it some divinely revealed sanction. A tolerance that is not the out come of a sentimental desire for peaceful relations between the members of different religions, or perspectives with in one given religion, but one which is deeply rooted in a recognition of, and respect for, the holiness that lies at the core of all faith and wisdom traditions, all revealed religions. According to our lights, a universalism that does not include particularism is itself particularist and exclusivist— it excludes exclusivism. A universalist perspective based on Sufi hermeneutics provides a third way between secular pluralism and religious exclusivism.

We live for the first time in history in an age of multiculturalism and it is utterly important and central that we think in plural terms about faith. The most towering problem facing people in the 19th century was nationalism and in the 20th century it has been ideology as, for most of the century, the nations have been located on the opposite sides of the ideological divide and the cold war conflict. But now when the war in gone and the ideological conflict in over the greatest problem that faces the 21st century is the ethnic conflict and because those conflicts are powered, in part, by multiple faiths clashing with one an other it is important that we turn our attention to that danger and do our best to annihilate whatever problems we face now or that may come down the road.

Until quite recently, most of the writers tended to keep religion out of their scenarios of the future. Today, projections of a simply secular future seem less persuasive. The shift in perception could have diverse reasons but one might argue that this perception is just catching up with the reality obscured by the expansion of Communism earlier in the twentieth century and by the influence, especially in the media and education, of a largely secularized Western-educated elite throughout that period. Probably between 4 and 5 billion of the world's more than 6 billion people are directly involved with a religion today, and this picture seems unlikely to change a great deal during the rest of the twenty-first century. So during the lifetimes of all of us now alive we would do well to reckon seriously with religions as shapers of our world, for worse or for better especially when there is no widespread confidence that 'the secular project' can adequately resource any society in areas such as personal and family life, ethics and politics, health and environment, civic and international responsibilities. The materials included in this anthology could be extremely helpful in formulating a wholesome response to the challenges faced by us in the present world.

As Iqbal, the sage and poet of the East, had said:[5]

حرف بد برلب آوردن خطا است کافر و مومن بمہ خلق خداست
آدمیت احترام آدمی باخبر شو از مقام آدمی
بندۂ عشق از خدا گیرد طریق می شود بر کافر و مومن شفیق

Soiling one's tongue with ill-speech is a sin
The disbeliever and the believer are alike creatures of God.
Humanity, human respect for human reality:
Be conscious of the station of humanity.

...

The slave of love who takes his path from God
Becomes a loving friend of both disbeliever and believer.

MUHAMMAD SUHEYL UMAR
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IQBAL ACADEMY PAKISTAN

30TH JUNE 2008

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[1] Frithjof Schuon, "De l' Alliance", *Etudes Traditionnelles*, Paris, June, 1940.

[2] Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, (Vol. III, p. 153, line 12), Dār, Ṣādir, Beirut, n.d.

[3] Frithjof Schuon, "Letter", in *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, World Wisdom Books, Bloomington, Indiana, 2004.

[4] See Martin Lings, "With all Thy Mind", in the anthology.

[5] Muhammad Iqbal, *Javid Namah*, in *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, p. 673.

DIVERSITY OF REVELATION

Frithjof Schuon

Seeing that there is but one Truth, must we not conclude that there is but one Revelation, one sole Tradition possible? To this our answer is, first of all, that Truth and Revelation are not absolutely equivalent terms, since Truth is situated beyond forms, whereas Revelation, or the Tradition which derives from it, belongs to the formal order, and that indeed by definition; but to speak of form is to speak of diversity, and so of plurality; the grounds for the existence and nature of form are: expression, limitation, differentiation. What enters into form, thereby enters also into number, hence into repetition and diversity; the formal principle– inspired by the infinity of the divine Possibility– confers diversity on this repetition. One could conceive, it is true, that there might be only one Revelation or Tradition for this our human world and that diversity should be realised through other worlds, unknown by man or even unknowable by him; but that would imply a failure to understand that what determines the difference among forms of Truth is the difference among human receptacles. For thousands of years already, humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches, which constitute so many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves; the existence of spiritual receptacles so different and so original demands differentiated refractions of the one Truth. Let us note that this is not always a question of race, but more often of human groups, very diverse perhaps, but none the less subject to mental conditions which, taken as a whole, make of them sufficiently homogeneous spiritual recipients; though this fact does not prevent some individuals from being able to leave their framework, for the human collectivity never has anything absolute about it. This being so, it can be said that the diverse Revelations do not really contradict one another, since they do not apply to the same receptacle, and since God never addresses the same message to two or more receptacles of divergent character, corresponding analogically, that is, to dimensions which are formally incompatible; contradictions arise only on one and the same level. The apparent antinomies between Traditions are like differences of language or of symbol; contradictions are in human receptacles, not in God; the diversity in the world is a function of its remoteness from the divine Principle, which amounts to saying that the Creator cannot will both that the world should be, and that it should not be the world.

If Revelations more or less exclude one another, this is so of necessity because God, when He speaks, expresses Himself in absolute mode; but this absoluteness relates to the universal content rather than to the form; it applies to the latter only in a relative and symbolical sense, because the form is a symbol of the content and so too of humanity as a whole, to which this content is, precisely, addressed. It cannot be that God should compare the diverse Revelations from outside as might a scholar; He keeps Himself so to speak at the centre of each Revelation, as if it were the only one. Revelation speaks an absolute language, because God is absolute, not because the form is; in other words, the absoluteness of the Revelation is absolute in itself, but relative *qua* form.

The language of the sacred Scriptures is divine, but at the same time it is necessarily the language of men; it is made for men and could be divine only in an indirect manner. This incommensurability between God and our means of expression is clear in the Scriptures, where neither our words, nor our logic are adequate to the celestial intention; the language of mortals does not *a priori* envisage things *sub specie aeternitatis.* The uncreated Word shatters created speech while directing it towards the Truth; it manifests thus its transcendence in relation to the limitations of human powers of logic; man must be able to overstep these limits if he wishes to attain the divine meaning of the words, and he oversteps them in metaphysical knowledge, the fruit of pure intellection, and in a certain fashion also in love, when he touches the essences. To wish to reduce divine Truth to the conditionings of earthly truth is to forget that there is no common measure between the finite and the Infinite.

The absoluteness of a Revelation demands its unicity; but on the level of facts such unicity cannot occur to the extent of a fact being produced that is unique of its kind, that is to say constituting on its own what amounts to a whole genus. Reality alone is unique, on whatever level it is envisaged: God, universal Substance, divine Spirit immanent in this Substance; however, there are relatively unique facts, Revelation for example, for since all is relative and since even principles must suffer impairment, at any rate in appearance, and in so far as they enter into contingencies, uniqueness must be able to occur on the plane of facts; if unique facts did not exist in any fashion, diversity would be absolute, which is contradiction pure and simple. The two must both be capable of manifesting themselves, unicity as well as diversity; but the two manifestations are of necessity relative, the one must limit the other. It results from this, on the one hand that diversity could not abolish the unity which is its substance, and on the other that unity or unicity must be contradicted by diversity on its own plane of existence; in other words, in every manifestation of unicity, compensatory diversity must be maintained, and indeed a unique fact occurs only in a part and not in the whole of a cosmos. It could be said that such and such a fact is unique in so far as it represents God for such and such an environment, but not in so far as it exists; this existing however does not abolish the symbolism of the fact, it repeats it outside the framework, within which the unique fact occurred, but on the same plane. Existence, which conveys the divine Word, does not abolish the unicity of such and such a Revelation in its providentially appointed field, but it repeats the manifestation of the Word outside this field; it is thus that diversity, without abolishing the metaphysically necessary manifestation of unicity, none the less contradicts it outside a particular framework, but on the same level, in order thus to show that the uncreated and non-manifested Word alone possesses absolute unicity.

If the objection is raised that at the moment when a Revelation occurs, it is none the less unique for the world, and not for a part of the world only, the answer is that diversity does not necessarily occur in simultaneity, it extends also to the temporal succession, and this is clearly the case when it is a question of Revelations. Moreover, a uniqueness of fact must not be confused with a uniqueness of principle; we do not deny the possibility of a fact unique to the world in a certain period, but that of a fact unique in an absolute sense. A fact which appears unique in space, is not so in time, and inversely; but even within each of these conditions of existence, it could never be affirmed that a fact is unique of its kind– for it is the genus or the quality, not the particularity, which is in question– because we can measure neither time nor space, and still less other modes which elude us.

This whole doctrine is clearly illustrated by the following example: the sun is unique in our solar system, but it is not so in space; we can see other suns, since they are situated in space like ours, but we do not see them as suns. The uniqueness of our sun is belied by the multiplicity of the fixed stars, without thereby ceasing to be valid within the system which is ours under Providence; the unicity is then manifested in the part, not in the totality, although this part is an image of the totality and represents it for us; it then is, by the divine Will, the totality, but only for us, and only in so far as our mind, whose scope is likewise willed by God, does not go beyond forms; but even in this case, the part 'is' totality so far as its spiritual efficacy is concerned.

We observe the existence, on earth, of diverse races, whose differences are 'valid' since there are no 'false' as opposed to 'true' races; we observe also the existence of multiple languages, and no one thinks of contesting their legitimacy; the same holds good for the sciences and the arts. Now it would be astonishing if this diversity did not occur also on the religious plane that is to say if the diversity of human receptacles did not involve diversity of the divine contents, from the point of view of form, not of essence. But just as man appears, in the framework of each race, simply as 'man' and not as a 'White' or a 'Yellow', and as each language appears in its own sphere as 'language' and not as such and such a language among others, so each religion is of necessity on its own plane 'religion', without any comparison or relative connotation which, in view of the end to be attained, would be meaningless; to say 'religion' is to say 'unique religion'; explicitly to practise one religion, is implicitly to practise them all.

An idea or an enterprise which comes up against insurmountable obstacles is contrary to the nature of things; the ethnic diversity of humanity and the geographical extent of the earth suffice to make highly unlikely the axiom of one unique religion for all men, and on the contrary highly likely— to say the least— the need for a plurality of religions; in other words, the idea of a single religion does not escape contradiction if one takes account of its claims to absoluteness and universality on the one hand, and the psychological and physical impossibility of their realisation on the other, not to mention the antinomy between such claims and the necessarily relative character of all religious mythology; only pure metaphysic and pure prayer are absolute and therefore universal. As for 'mythology', it is– apart from its intrinsic content of truth and efficacy– indispensable for enabling metaphysical and essential truth to 'gain a footing' in such and such a human collectivity.

Religion is a 'supernaturally natural' fact which proves its truth– from the point of view of extrinsic proofs– by its human universality, so that the plurality and ubiquity of the religious phenomenon constitutes a powerful argument in favour of religion as such. Just as a plant makes no mistake in turning towards the light, so man makes no mistake in following Revelation and, in consequence, in following tradition. There is something infallible in the natural instinct of animals, and also in the 'supernatural instinct' of men; but man is the only 'animal' capable of going against nature as such, either wrongly by violating it, or else by transcending it.

‘WITH ALL THY MIND’

Martin Lings

(Shaykh Abu Bakr Siraj al-Din)

It could be said that one of the criteria of orthodoxy in a religion is that it should provide adequate means for the fulfilment of the following commandment in all its aspects: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with thy entire mind, and with all thy strength.[1]

The most essential part of the commandment is clearly its opening. The heart is the organ of faith, whose higher possibilities are certainty, intellection, gnosis. It is called ‘heart’ because it is as central and vital to the soul as the physical heart is to the body. The function of a centre is always that of attraction and radiation, on the one hand to draw towards it the outlying parts and to keep them knitted together as an integral whole, and on the other to transmit to them, according to the measure and the mode of their varying capacities, what it receives from worlds which lie above and beyond it. To ‘love with all thy heart’ means total love. Mind and soul, which depend ultimately on the heart for love of God, needed separate mention in the commandment only because their domination by the centre was reduced at the Fall to being no more than a virtuality, and because on the path of return to the primordial state of loving 'with all thy heart', mind-love and soul-love have a function of cause— or so it seems— in the process of re-awakening heart-love, though they could never be fully realized except as a result of that re-awakening. The give and the take in question correspond to the interaction of human initiative and Divine Grace. However much the manner of expression may vary, religions are in agreement that a minimum of effort from mind or soul in the direction of the heart, that is, the Transcendent, is guaranteed to call down upon itself a vivifying and growth-promoting force out of all proportion to the gesture that released it. But that human gesture needs to be continually repeated.

Loss of direct contact with the heart meant loss of that inward attraction which alone could counterbalance the centrifugal tendencies of the other faculties. Left to their own resources, they were bound to move further and further from the centre and therefore from each other. This process of disintegration, although checked and even partially reversed for brief periods by repeated Divine interventions throughout the course of time, is inevitably now near to reaching its extremities, inasmuch as all traditions agree that we are approaching the end of this temporal cycle; and one of the most striking features of the general disintegration characteristic of modern man is an unparalleled mental independence by reason of which many minds are feverishly active and almost 'acrobatically' nimble. The same lack of anchorage makes also for an abnormally hurried superficiality of judgement and conclusion.

It is this mental independence which makes so timely and so necessary the chapter on 'Understanding and Believing' in Frithjof Schuon's *Logic and Transcendence*.[2] The author focuses our attention on the monstrous yet now not uncommon phenomenon of understanding metaphysical truths in the mind without any assent of belief from the soul, let alone the heart. The only remedy is re-integration, since only if the different faculties are knit closer together can the soul be brought within near enough reach of the mind to respond to the light of the doctrine, which is addressed to the mind directly. But mental understanding followed by re-integration are as a second and third stage in the path of return. In the present context we are concerned with the preliminary stage of removing obstacles which make it difficult or impossible for the mind to understand. Intelligence has its rights, and these have not always been upheld by the representatives of religion. The mental faculties need to be appeased and re-assured ; and to this end religion has no option but to sacrifice certain half-truths, not to speak of mere suppositions and conjectures, which in the past were considered as powerful motives for loving God 'with all thy soul and with all thy strength.'

A religion's claim to unique efficacy must be allowed the status of half-truth because there is, in fact, in the vast majority of cases, no alternative choice.[3] In the past it would have been as pointless for a religion to dwell on the validity and efficacy of other religions as it would be for an announcement to be made from an all-capacious lifeboat to those struggling in the waters about it that five miles away there was an equally good lifeboat. The lack of any such acknowledgment did not cause minds to falter in their worship, because each traditional civilization lived for the most part in high-walled isolation from other sectors of humanity. Moreover, there is nothing questionable in the general notion that certain religions are defunct and have been superseded by Divine intervention. Nor can it be doubted that pseudo-religion is a possibility, since the scriptures themselves speak of false prophets. A mediaeval Christian, for example, was therefore not mentally compromised because he classed Judaism as a superseded religion or because he classed Islam as a pseudo-religion. Everyone has a right to be ignorant or mistaken about what takes place in worlds other than his own.

But in the present age the isolating walls have for the most part been broken down. Otherwise expressed, the lifeboats are mostly within reach of each other, and life lines even cross; and minds are inevitably troubled by thoughts which would never have assailed them in the past. In a word, it becomes difficult to dedicate the mind to the worship of God when religious authorities make claims which the intelligence sees to be in direct contradiction with what religion teaches about the nature of God.

It may be objected that if the present situation is new, globally speaking, it none the less existed in the past, if only for relatively small minorities who lived at the frontiers which separated one theocratic civilization from another. For the last thirteen hundred years and more, Christians and Muslims have lived side by side in the Near East, with ample opportunities for seeing that 'the other religion' is, in fact, just as genuine as their own. But until recent times the vast majority, including intellectuals, were none the less able, in all peace of mind, to live out their lives in the conviction that their religion alone was truly valid. Why should not the same exclusivism still be compatible with mental serenity?

The answer is partly that the frontiers which separate one perspective from another are not merely geographical. In a theocratic civilization, men are perpetually surrounded by reminders of God and the Beyond; and this produces an 'inwardness' which is both individual and collective, and which is itself a kind of isolating wall.[4] The destruction of such walls is an evil; but the virtues they helped to maintain are indispensable and must be supported by other means. The following quotation, though it goes far beyond the context of what we are considering here, is none the less extremely relevant to the question of 'half-truths' as obstacles to mental co-operation in piety.[5]

> The usual religious arguments, through not probing sufficiently to the depth of things and moreover not having previously had any

> need to do so, are psychologically somewhat outworn and fail to satisfy certain requirements of causality. If human societies degenerate on the one hand with the passage of time, they accumulate on the other hand experiences in virtue of old age, however intermingled with errors these may be. This paradox is something that any pastoral teaching intended to be effective should take into account, not by drawing new directives from the general error, but on the contrary by using arguments of a higher order, intellectual rather than sentimental.

Mental dilemma is a more or less inevitable consequence of seeking to maintain, in the modern world, all the details of the average religious perspective which characterized one's pious ancestors. A striking example of this is to be seen in an article on Jesus which a Jewish Rabbi was recently invited to write in one of our leading newspapers, the purpose of the invitation being to have an opinion which was representative of orthodox Jewry as a whole. The Rabbi's exposition is based on the question: What prompted Jesus to claim that he was the Messiah? A Jew, he maintains, is well qualified to answer this question in virtue of his special knowledge of the history of his own people, from which he knows that expectations of the Messiah had never been so strong as they were at that particular time. There was a kind of collective wishful thinking in the air which made it almost inevitable that someone would persuade himself and others that he was, in fact, the Lord's Anointed. The Rabbi goes on to speak appreciatively of Jesus as a man, acknowledges his excellent human qualities, emphasizes his good intentions, and excuses him for his messianic claims.

As a purely psychological explanation of how the Christian religion came into existence, this article opens up the way for someone else to demolish Judaism by exactly the same type of argument. Another point to be noticed is that the author, so it seems, does not dare to think beyond early first century Palestine either in time or in space. He speaks almost as if the crucifixion had only just been perpetrated, closing forever, as it must then have seemed to not a few, one of many chapters in the chronicle of false messianic claims. But what of world history in the last two thousand years? What of the fact that this 'false messiah' has taken possession, spiritually speaking, of three continents and half possession of a fourth, while making considerable inroads into the fifth? And what of the God who has allowed this wide-spread, long-lasting, deep-rooted deception to take place?

In other words, a would-be demonstration of the falsity of another religion proves to be a boomerang which comes back to strike at the very heart of one's own religion. For God is the heart of every religion; and a god who would allow deception on such a colossal scale would not be worth worshipping, even by the 'chosen people whom he had protected against that deception.'

On such a basis, belief can only be kept up by not following certain trains of thought which demand to be followed, and by refusing to draw certain obvious conclusions— in fact by no longer being equipped 'with all thy mind', let alone loving God. Such belief is exceedingly precarious; and even if the believer in question can live out his own life in orthodoxy to the end, he has little means of fortifying others, and he is in perpetual danger of finding any day that his sons and his daughters have lapsed into agnosticism or atheism. The anti-spiritual pressures of the modern world being what they are— and this applies especially to modern education— the scales are heavily weighted against finding the only true solution, namely a more universal spiritual perspective, which means moving nearer to the Spirit and therefore 'upstream' and 'against the current'. On the other hand, the false solution of agnosticism is simply the next easy step down from misgivings about religion that are based on rationalism and pseudo-logic.

It seems to the Jew that to admit the Messianic claims of Jesus would amount to admitting that Judaism has been superseded— and Christians are waiting at the door to tell him that this is indeed the case. He wrongly imagines himself to be faced, practically speaking, with a choice between Judaism and Christianity. But it would be possible— and this is certainly a solution which some orthodox Jews have individually[6] found for themselves— at least to reserve judgement about Jesus, or even to accept in his first coming a foretaste of the final and all-fulfilling Messianic advent, while continuing to cling to the God-given certainties of the Pentateuch and the Psalms. For Jews who were not swept into Christianity on the crest of its initial wave, the fact that the Messianic mission has not yet been altogether fulfilled can be taken as a sign that Judaism has not yet been superseded and as a justification for remaining faithful to the religion of Moses.

It is relatively easy for the Jew to go half way towards the perspective of *religio perennis* simply by reserving judgement about other religions. Since Judaism is not a world religion he can, with a clear conscience, leave other sectors of humanity to Providence in the certainty that It will take care of them. The Christian on the other hand feels himself to be the chosen instrument of Providence in this respect, as indeed he is, but within limits. The Church's refusal to see these limits results in a perspective which, in the modem world, runs dangerously close to the precipice of disbelief.

It is now some years since the already mentioned book *The Call of the Minaret* was published, and there is reason to think that the views of its author have moved since that time in a more universal direction. It is none the less a faithful mirror of the dilemma which faces many Christians, in particular clergymen and more especially missionaries, who come into close contact with Islam, and who cannot help being deeply impressed by its strength and its fullness as a religion. It is impossible for them to persist in calling Muhammad a 'false prophet'. On the other hand they will not, or as the case may be, dare not, give up their claim that the Passion of Jesus is the sole means of man's redemption. The point of the book's title is that the muezzin's call should be for Christians as a summons to duty, 'the duty of restoring to Muslims the Christ that they have missed.' The author adds: 'The Christ Jesus of the historic faith is an unescapable figure. It is He we must present to the world of Islam ... yet how we are to do this remains a problem and a burden!' These last words are an understatement. It is almost impossible to make adult Muslims accept the Christian doctrine of redemption, for they already have a full doctrine of Divine Grace and Mercy in another form, and the historic Jesus plays no part in it, although he remains a most benevolent and glorious onlooker. The Qur'ān calls him the Word of God and a Spirit from God; and Muhammad testified to his second coming. In the days of the Caliphate, one of the traditional ways of wishing long life to a Caliph was to say to him: May you live long enough to give your government into the hands of Jesus, the son of Mary—Peace be on them both! But it would be impossible to introduce Jesus into the inner structure of Islam, for the building is already complete and perfect. Providence has not been waiting nearly fourteen hundred years for some Christian missionary to lay the foundation stone.

The author in question seems to have certain suspicions along these lines, and sparks of exasperation— or something akin to that– fly out from time to time: 'Islam has proved in history the supreme displacer of the faith of Christ', and 'The rise of Islam will always be a painful puzzle to the Christian mind.' But although he speaks of 'transcending difficulties', there is nothing really transcendent in the book from beginning to end, and that is its weakness. On such a basis, there can clearly be no question of 'loving with all thy mind'.

The same criticisms cannot be made of A *New Threshold*[7] by the Bishop of Guildford, because there is at least one remarkable outlet onto universality in a timely quotation from St. Justin Martyr's *Apology*, where the uniqueness of Christ as Redeemer is expounded at the level of the Logos and not allowed to trespass upon lower domains which are subject to multiplicity. From this point of view, the act of Redemption belongs to the Divine Nature of Jesus, not to his human nature, and since it thus transcends time and space, it cannot be limited to any historical event. 'We have been taught that Christ is the First begotten of God, and have testified that he is the Intellect (*logos*) of which every race of man partakes. Those who lived in accordance with intellect are Christians, even though they were called godless, such as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus and others like them . . . Those who lived by Intellect, and those who so live now, are Christians, fearless and unperturbed'.[8]

In recalling St. Justin's standpoint as a legitimate one for Christians to take with regard to adherents of other religions, the Bishop of Guildford thereby implicitly assents to its unescapable corollary that the act of Redemption operates in other modes as well as in the specifically Christian mode of the Passion. The contrary claim, that in a world subject to multiplicity the Divine Mercy, by definition Infinite, should be limited to one single effective act is in principle something that a metaphysician cannot readily accept, quite apart from the overwhelming factual evidence against it. Admittedly the majority cannot be sacrificed to a minority; but certain claims which may have 'worked' in the past are of an increasingly dubious value for the majority while being lethal to the intellectual minority. There are Christians for whom the *Bhagavat Gita* comes next to the Gospels and the Psalms as their most reverend book; and this Hindu scripture bears a most eloquent and irrefutable witness to a redeeming Divine Incarnation other than Jesus in the person of Krishna and, by extension, of other Hindu Avataras, including the Buddha. As Frithjof Schuon remarks:[9]

> Every exoteric doctrine is in fact characterized by a disproportion between its dogmatic demands and its dialectical guarantees; for its demands are absolute as deriving from the

> Divine Will and therefore also from Divine Knowledge, whereas its guarantees are relative, because they are independent of this Will and based, not on Divine Knowledge, but on a human point of view, that of reason and sentiment. For instance, Brahmins are invited by Christian missionaries to abandon completely a religion that has lasted for several thousand of years, one that has provided the spiritual support of innumerable generations and has produced flowers of wisdom and holiness down to our times. The arguments that are produced to justify this extraordinary demand are in no wise logically conclusive, nor do they bear any proportion to the magnitude of the demand; the reasons that the Brahmins have for remaining faithful to their spiritual patrimony are therefore infinitely stronger than the reasons by which it is sought to persuade them to cease being what they are. The disproportion, from the Hindu point of view, between the immense reality of the Brahmanic tradition and the insufficiency of the religious counter arguments is such as to prove quite sufficiently that had God wished to submit the world to one religion only, the arguments put forward on behalf of this religion would not be so feeble, nor those of certain so-called 'infidels' so powerful; in other words, if God were on the side of one religious form only, the arguments put forward on behalf of this religion would be such that no man of good faith would be able to resist it'.

To this passage, written for Christians in affirmation of the validity of Hinduism, let us add the following in affirmation of Islam:[10]

> .....that God could have allowed a religion that was merely the invention of a man to conquer a part of humanity and to maintain itself for more than a thousand years in a quarter of the inhabited world, thus betraying the love, faith, and hope of a multitude of sincere and fervent souls— this is contrary to the Laws of the Divine Mercy, or in other words, to those of Universal Possibility ....If Christ had been the only manifestation of the Word, supposing such a uniqueness of

manifestation to be possible, the effect of His birth would have been the instantaneous reduction of the universe to ashes.

To consider now the limitations of Muslim exoterism, it must be remembered that from its stronghold of finality as the last religion of this cycle of time, Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, can afford to be generous to other religions. Moreover its position in the cycle confers on it something of the function of a summer-up, which obliges it to mention with justice what has preceded it, or at the least to leave an open door for what it does not specifically mention.

> *Verily We have sent messengers before thee*[11] *About some of them have We told thee, and about some have We not told thee.*[12]

We may quote also:

> *Verily the Faithful*[13] *and the Jews and the Sabians*[14] *and the Christians whoso believeth in God and the Last Day and doeth deeds of piety-no fear shall come upon them neither shall they grieve.*[15]

There is a place for both Judaism and Christianity with in the Islamic civilization, and Muslims are obliged to protect the synagogues and churches and other Jewish and Christian sanctuaries. It was a calamity for Spanish Jews when the Christians re conquered Spain.

It has to be admitted, however, that the authorities of Islam have been no less ready than their counterparts in other religions to risk 'with all thy mind' for the sake of 'With all thy soul and with all thy strength'. Muslims have been encouraged to believe, and the majority have been only too eager to believe, that Islam has superseded all other religions and that it is therefore the sole truly valid religion on earth. But however absolute the claims of Muslim theologians and jurisprudents may be, they are shown in fact to be relative by the tolerance which Islam makes obligatory towards Judaism and Christianity. Taken with that 'grain of salt'— though few are fully conscious of it— the claims in question are not necessarily unpalatable to the intelligence, and are not bound to prevent an intellectual from loving God with all his mind, provided he remain within the walls of the Islamic civilization, which stop him from seeing the full implications of this exclusivism.

But once outside these walls, the situation is different. The most that a sound intelligence can accept are the claims which naturally result from the fact that Islam represents the most recent Divine intervention upon earth. But these claims, though considerable, are relative, not absolute[16] and a Muslim intellectual in the modern world will not find peace of mind except by assenting to this. It should not however be difficult for him to do so, for a glance at those passages of the Qur'ān on which the theologians' exclusivism is based shows that the verses in question call for a deeper and more universal interpretation than is generally given.

One of these passages is the following:

> *He it is who hath sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of Truth, that He may make it prevail over all religion, though the idolaters be averse.*[17]

This verse can be given a narrower or a wider interpretation. Its more immediate meaning is clearly the narrower one: the *messenger* is Muhammad, *the religion of Truth is* the Qur'ānic message and the *idolaters* are the pagan Arabs, Persians, Berbers, and certain other pagans. But what of the words *that He may make it prevail over all religion?* It is here that the crux of the matter may be said to lie.

Whatever the disadvantages of modern education, it serves to implant a more global concept of world history and geography than is normally held by members of traditional civilisations which tend, as we have seen, to be 'aloof' and 'introspective'. The wider knowledge is a mixed blessing, but where it exists it must be taken into account. An intelligent Muslim, living in the modern world, is bound to realize sooner or later, suddenly or gradually, not only that the Qur'ānic message has not been made to *prevail over all religion,* but also that Providence itself is directly responsible for the 'short-coming'. The shock of this realization may shatter his belief, unless he be enabled to understand that the verse in question has a wider significance. In the narrower sense, *all religion* can only be taken to mean 'all religion in your part of the world'. But if *all religion* be interpreted in an absolute sense, and if *idolaters* be made to include such people as the Germans and Celts, many of whom were still pagan at the outset of Islam, then *the religion of Truth* must also be given its widest application, and the words 'once again' must be understood. (i. e. He it is who hath sent once again His messenger . . .), for the Divinity has sent messengers before, and never with anything other than *the religion of Truth.* These last four words, like the term Islam itself, can be taken in a universal sense, to include all true religion. The Qur'ān makes it clear that the religions of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus may be called 'Islam! in its literal meaning of 'submission to God'. In this sense Islam may be said to have been made to *prevail over all religion.*[18] But in its narrower sense Islam has only been allowed to *prevail over all religion* in a limited part of the world. It is now fourteen hundred years since the revelation of the Qur'ān and Providence has allowed non-Qur'ānic modes of *the religion of Truth* to remain as barriers to the Qur'ānic message in more than half the globe.

In the same context, verses affirming that Muhammad has been sent *for all* people[19] have to be understood in a less monopolizing way than they have been throughout the centuries by Muslims with little or no general knowledge about other religions and their distribution. What the Qur'ān tells us here is that Islam, unlike Judaism or Hinduism, is a world religion. But it is not denying that Buddhism and Christianity are also world religions, that is, open to everybody, at least in principle. These last words are important, for God *doth what He will,*[20] and our only means of knowing His Will in this respect are by the results.[21] With regard to the world as it has been in its geographical distribution of peoples for the last two thousand years, it will not escape the notice of an observant Muslim any more than an observant Christian that there is, spatially speaking, a certain sector in which Providence has worked wonders for Buddhism and done relatively little for either Christianity or Islam. The same Muslim will also notice that there is another sector in which Providence has worked wonders for Christianity and done very little for the other world religions; and the fact that between these two sectors there is a third in which Islam has been favoured beyond all other religions will not be enough to exonerate him from changing his perspective. For if, as he had been led to believe, God had truly wished Islam (in the narrower sense) to spread over the whole world, why did He construct such impregnable barriers to it in so vast an area?[22]

To take the nearest example, Providence was putting an end to paganism in England at the very time when the Qur'ān was being revealed. *The religion of Truth,* in its Christian mode, was being made to *prevail over all religion,* although the idolaters were averse; and since a Divine intervention is never mediocre, Christianity was being established on the firmest foundations, so that not even the Qur'ānic message, at the height of the power of the Islamic civilization, could come near to prevailing against it. And yet it would have been easy for Providence to have waited a few years and converted England to the new religion instead of setting up there such a resistance to it. The answer to the 'problem', if anyone considers it to require an answer, lies in the following verse, which many consider to be among the last Revelations received by the Prophet and which in any case belongs to the period which marks the close of his mission. As such it coincides with a cyclic moment of extreme significance— the last 'opportunity'[23] for a direct message to be sent from Heaven to earth during what remains of this cycle of time. Many of the last Qur'ānic revelations are concerned with completing and perfecting the new religion. But this verse is a final and lasting message for mankind as a whole. The Qur'ān expressly addresses the adherents of all the different orthodoxies on earth; and no message could be more relevant to the age in which we live and, in particular, to the mental predicament of man in these later days.

> *For each of you We have appointed a law and a way. And if God*[24] *had willed He would have made you one people. But (He hath willed it otherwise) that He may put you to the test in what He has given you.*[25] *So vie with one another in good works. Unto God will ye be brought back, and He will inform you about that wherein ye differed.*[26]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] St. Mark, XII, 30. In Deuteronomy VI, 5, to which this is a reference, the element 'mind' is not mentioned, which makes no fundamental difference since the mind is strictly speaking a psychic faculty, and is therefore implicit in the word 'soul'. In St. Matthew, XXII, 37, on the other hand, the element 'strength' is absent which again makes no difference inasmuch as physical energy and endurance are dominated by the will, which is also a psychic faculty.

[2] Ch. XII (Harper and Row, 1975).

[3] As Frithjof Schuon has remarked, for those who come face to face with the founder of a new religion, the lack of alternative choice becomes as it were absolute in virtue of the correspondingly absolute greatness of the Divine Messenger himself. It is moreover at its outset, that is, during its brief moment of 'absoluteness', that the claims of a religion are for the most part formulated. But with the passage of time there is inevitably a certain levelling out between the new and the less new, the more so in that the less new may have special claims on certain people

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[4] 'Aloof' and 'introspective' are the epithets applied by Kenneth Cragg to the Eastern Churches, whom he severely criticizes in *The Call of the Minaret* for having done practically nothing throughout the centuries to convert the Islamic East to Christianity. It does not seem to occur to him that the qualities in question, though inconvenient for missionaries, are nearer to virtue than to vice. Moreover, the 'aloofness' may well be in part a subconscious unwillingness to 'rush in where angels fear to tread'.

[5] Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy,* World of Islam Festival Publishing Company, London, 1976; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000, p. 53.

[6] For the ideal collective attitude of Judaism to Christianity, and for the reasons why it could never be realized, see Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, p. 58.

[7] This booklet, with the subtitle, 'Guidelines for the Churches in their relations with Muslim Communities' has recently been published to coincide with the World of Islam Festival.

[8] *First Apology*, Section 46. For the word 'Reason, as translation of *logos*, we have substituted 'Intellect'.

[9] *The Transcendent Unity of Religion* (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 14. The title 'With All Thy Mind' makes the many references to Frithjof Schuon inevitable because his writings lead the way in giving the mind its due in respect of religion. Not that they are limited to the mind, any more than the mind, in the context of 'with all thy mind', can be limited to itself, since to be fully operative its higher reaches depend directly on the heart. It is to the mind, to the intermediary intellective faculties, and to the heart that Frithjof Schuon's writings are above all addressed– a domain covered by the words *Logic and Transcendence* which might serve in a sense as a title for most of his books as they do in fact for one. To avoid giving a false impression, however, it must be added, as regards the soul, that while demolishing certain outworn human arguments which have in the past served the cause of 'with all thy soul', he puts other arguments of a higher order in their place. Few writers, if any, have so clearly demonstrated the importance of sacred art in this respect. And who in recent centuries has written so profoundly and unmoralistically about the necessity of virtue?

[10] *ibid,* p. 20.

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[11] Muhammad.

[12] Qur'an, XL, 78.

[13] Muslims.

[14] There is no general consensus of opinion as to what religion is referred to, and certain Muslim rulers, in India and elsewhere, have made the name in question a loophole for tolerance towards their non-Muslim, non-Christian and non Jewish subjects.

[15] V, 69.

[16] An orthodox Jew, for example, deeply in love with the Hebrew Psalms, would be justified in hesitating to give up his religion for one that was based on a Revelation in a language he did not know; and he could use Qur'ānic argument to justify himself.

[17] IX, 33.

[18] The verse we are considering is parallel to the words of Christ, 'This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world. Then shall the end come,' which likewise admit of both a limited and a universal interpretation, according to what is understood by 'world'. In its wider sense (as well as the narrower one) the first part of this prophecy has now come true inasmuch as every people on earth is now within easy reach of the gospel of the Kingdom, that is, the religion of Truth, in at least one of its modes.

[19] XXXIV, 28.

[20] II, 253.

[21] That is, the great and lasting results which have been put to the test by centuries of time.

[22] The answer of some Muslim theologians to this question has been, in all seriousness, that Almighty God has evidently decided to send the larger part of humanity astray, and that it is not for us to question His Wisdom. But faith on this basis can never be more than fragmentary. By such logic the mind surreptitiously robs itself of love, while turning a blind eye to some of the most essential Attributes of the Object of love. Another 'explanation', shared also by Christians, *mutatis mutandis,* is that the 'religion of Truth' (understood in a non-universal sense) will in fact finally prevail over the whole world. *Veritas omnia vincit.* But if only one religion had been valid in the eyes of Heaven for the last thousand years or more, the expectation of a sudden total triumph of that true religion at the end of the cycle could not be

enough to appease the mind, that is, it could not convincingly 'exonerate' Providence from having allowed false religion to triumph so far and wide for so long.

[23] *God doth what He will.* But it is clearly in the interests of man that a Divine intervention which founds a new religion should be overwhelmingly recognizable as such. The accompanying guarantees must be too tremendous, and too distinctive, to leave room for doubts in any but the most perverse, which means that certain kinds of things must be kept in reserve as the special prerogative of such a period. The Qur'an refers to this 'economy' when it affirms that questions which are put to God during the period of Revelation will be answered (V, 101), the implication being that after the Revelation has been completed, questions will no longer be answered so directly. It is as if a door between Heaven and earth were kept open during the mission of a Divine Messenger, to be closed at all other times.

[24] The change from first to third person with regard to the Divinity is frequent in the Qur'an.

[25] If He had sent only one religion to a world of widely differing affinities and aptitudes, it would not have been a fair test for all. He has therefore sent different religions, specially suited to the needs and characteristics of the different sectors of humanity.

[26] V, 48.

BRILLIANT ANSWERS TO THE WRONG QUESTION

POSTMODERNISM AND THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

Huston Smith

In the wake of its Traditional and Modern periods, the Western world is now generally regarded as having become Postmodern.[1] And as the entire world is still (at this stage) westernizing, I propose to think about religion's relation to Postmodernism. Dr. Akbar S. Ahmed of the University of Cambridge has written a book about *Post modernism and Islam*,[2] but my statement differs from his in two respects. I shall not limit my remarks to Postmodernism's relationship to Islam, and I shall give "post-modern" a different twist from the one he gives it. Because Dr. Ahmed approaches the subject sociologically, his book is really about Postmodern*ity* as a life-style. Postmodern*ism*, by contrast, suggests an outlook: the basic sense of things that gave rise to Postmodernity in the first place and now reflects its way of life.

Of the two, it is (as I say) Postmodernism that is my concern, but because it has become deeply implicated with Postmodernity, I shall summarize Dr. Ahmed's depiction of the latter before I turn to my own project. Instead of defining

Postmodernity, he describes it by listing what he takes to be eight of its features.[3]

1. It is animated by a spirit of pluralism, a heightened scepticism of traditional orthodoxies, and a rejection of a view of the world as a universal totality
2. It is powered by the media which provide its central dynamic.
3. It is paired with ethno-religious fundamentalism, which it exacerbates where it has not actually generated it.
4. It is bound to its past, even if mainly in protest.
5. It centres in the metropolis.
6. It presupposes democracy, but has a class element. Urban yuppies are its core.
7. It thrives on the juxtaposition of discourses, an exuberant eclecticism, and the mixing of images and media.
8. It is not given to plain and simple language.

In the context of Postmodernity thus described, I proceed now to target Postmodernism, the position that has conceptually parented it.

Contrasts tend to throw things into relief, so I shall define Postmodernism by contrasting it with the traditional and modern outlooks that preceded it, using epistemology as my point of entry.

Even today, when traditional peoples want to know where they are— when they wonder about the ultimate context in which their lives are set and which has the final say over them— they turn to their sacred texts; or in the case of oral, tribal peoples (what comes to the same thing), to the sacred myths that have been handed down to them by their ancestors. *Modernity* was born when a new source of knowledge was discovered, the scientific method. Because its controlled experiment enabled scientists to prove their hypothesis, and because those proven hypotheses demonstrated that they had the power to change the material world dramatically, Westerners turned from revelation to science for the Big Picture. Intellectual historians tell us that by the 19th century

Westerners were already more certain that atoms exist than they were confident of any of the distinctive things the Bible speaks of.

This much is straightforward, but it doesn't explain why Westerners aren't still modern rather than Postmodern, for science continues to be the main support of the Western mind. By headcount, most Westerners probably still *are* modern, but I am thinking of frontier thinkers who chart the course that others follow. These thinkers have ceased to be modern because they have seen through the so-called scientific worldview, recognizing it to be not scien*tific* but scien*tistic.* They continue to honour science for what it tells us about nature, but as that is not all that exists, science cannot provide us with a worldview— not a valid one. The most it can show us is half of the world, the half where normative and intrinsic values, existential and ultimate meanings, teleologies, qualities, immaterial realities, and beings that are superior to us do not appear.[4]

Where, then, do we now turn for an inclusive worldview? Postmodernism hasn't a clue. And this is its deepest definition.[5] In placing Postmodernism's "rejection of the view of the world as a universal totality" first in cataloguing its traits, Dr. Ahmed follows the now generally accepted definition of Postmodernism that Jean-Francois Lyotard fixed in place a decade ago in *The Postmodern Condition*: "incredulity toward metanarratives".[6] Having deserted revelation for science, the West has now abandoned the scientific worldview as well, leaving it without replacement. In this it mirrors the current stage of Western science which leaves *nature* unimaged. Before modern science, Westerners accepted Aristotle's model of the earth as surrounded by concentric, crystalline spheres. Newton replaced that model with his image of a clockwork universe, but Postmodern, quantum-and-relativity science gives us not a third model of nature but no model at all. Alan Wallace's *Choosing Reality* delineates eight different interpretations of quantum physics, all of which can claim the support of physics' proven facts.[7]

An analogy can pull all this together. If we think of traditional peoples as looking out upon the world through the window of revelation (their received myths and sacred texts), the window that they turned to look through in the modern period (science) proved to be stunted. It cuts off at the level of the human nose, which (metaphysically speaking) means that when we look through it our gaze slants downward and we see only things that are inferior to us.[8] As for the Postmodern window, it is boarded over and allows no inclusive view whatsoever. The current issue of *The University of Chicago Magazine* features on its cover a photograph of Richard Rorty announcing that "There is no Big Picture."

This conclusion admits of three versions that grow increasingly shrill. *Minimal*, descriptive Postmodernism rests its case with the fact that today no accepted worldview exists. *Mainline*, doctrinal Postmodernism goes on from there to argue for the permanence of this condition. Never again will we have a worldview of which we can be confident— we know too well how little the human mind can know. Members of this camp disagree as to whether reality has a deep structure to be known, but they agree that if it has, the human mind is incapable of knowing it. *Hardcore*, polemical Postmodernism goes a step further by adding "Good riddance." Worldviews oppress. They totalize, and in doing so marginalize minorities.

These three Postmodern stances set the agenda for the rest of my paper, for I want to argue that the world's religions question the last two, and qualify importantly the first.[9] Negatively, they deny that inclusive views necessarily and preponderantly oppress. Positively, they affirm that the human mind is made for such views, and that reliable ones already exist. Before I enter upon these constructive points, however, I want to take a quick look at recent French philosophy. For though it was mostly the unbridled historicism of German philosophers— Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger— that paved the way for Postmodernism, as our century closes,[10] it is the

French who have taken the lead. There is time to mention only one of them, and Jacques Derrida is the obvious candidate for being Postmodernism's most redoubtable spokesman. His deconstructionism is said already to be a mummy in Europe, but in America no one has been able to topple it from its pedestal where it presides, more or less, over the Postmodern scene.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION: DERRIDA AND DECONSTRUCTION

Dr. Ahmed rounded off his characterization of Postmodernity by noting that it is "not given to plain and simple language," and deconstructionist prose reads like a caricature of that point. Derrida calls "stupid" the view that deconstruction "amounts to saying that there is nothing beyond language,"[11] but whose fault is this when he ensconces "*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*"[12] (there is nothing outside the text) as the veritable motto of his movement. Even sympathetic interpreters have trouble explaining that motto. John Caputo, for example, assures us that Derrida does not "trap us inside the 'chain of signifiers,' in linguistic-subjective idealism, unable to do anything but play vainly with linguistic strings;" but a page or two later he tells us that "there are no things themselves outside textual and contextual limits, no naked contact with being which somehow shakes loose of the coded system which makes notions like the 'things in them-selves' possible to begin with and which enables speakers to refer to them."[13] Small wonder satirists have a field day. "Deconstruction goes well beyond right-you are-if-you-think-you-are" Walt Anderson reports. "Its message is closer to wrong you are whatever you think, unless you think you're wrong, in which case you may be right— but you don't really mean what you think you do anyway."[14]

I mention this because the costiveness of Derrida's prose makes one wonder if it serves, not to camouflage a leaky theory; I do not say that, but to make it pretentious. Where there is so much mystery, can profundity be lacking? Let us see.

Derrida insists that, contrary to its public image, deconstruction is an affirmative project,[15] for its essence consists of its "openness to the other."[16] John Caputo (upon whom I rely as a helpful interpreter of Derrida) glosses that definition as follows:[17]

> Derrida's thought is through and through a philosophy of "alterity,"...a relentless attentiveness and sensitivity to the 'other.' [It] stands for a kind of hyper-sensitivity to many "others"; the other person, other species, "man's" other, the other of the West, of Europe, of Being, of the "classic," of philosophy, of reason, etc. [The list goes on].

This understanding of deconstruction helps to situate it in the context of Postmodernism, for if Postmodernism is "incredulity toward metanarratives," Derrida's "openness to the other" fuels that incredulity. For metanarratives brook no alternatives, so that to side finally with "others" is to renounce worldviews.[18]

Let's look, then, at "sensitivity to others" as deconstruction's hallmark. Advancing it as such makes the position attractive, immensely so, for if God is included among the "others," deconstruction (in this reading) sounds a lot like religion, for surely religion's object is to deliver us from narcissistic self-centeredness into the otherness of God and, through God, to other people.[19] Deconstructionist prose swells with virtue, which places its critics in the position of seeming to be either personally insensitive or politically reactionary— the latter, deconstructionists frequently explicitly charge. But the question is: does deconstruction do more than *preach* the empathy we all aspire to? Do its claimed "skills" help us *develop* and *deploy* that virtue? Its theological enthusiasts see in it "a rich and vigorous catalyst for religious thought [for being] an open ended call to let something new come:...an approach that lets faith function with an enhanced sense of advent, gladdened by the good news of alterity by which we are summoned."[20] But this sounds like using the Christian connotations of Advent to bless modern enthusiasms for quantity, the thrill of novelty, and the prospect of progress— the more new arrivals the better. What if the newly welcomed guest turns out to be the Devil in disguise? Should skinhead Neo-Nazis and the Klu Klux Klan be given the same hearing as widows and orphans? Our hearts invariably go out to the "others" that deconstructionists name, but have they discovered techniques to help us winnow hard cases? A countless number of possible contrasts to (or negations of) the present situation obviously exist. Which ones deserve our attentions?

This is no small question, but the deeper point is this. Deconstruction is first and foremost a theory of language. This should temper our expectations right off, for those theories come and go— structuralism, generative grammar; what will be next? Two things, though, characterize the constant parade. First, the deeper theorists dive into language, the bigger their problems become. A review of Randy Harris' recent book, *The Linguistic Wars*, concludes by quoting a linguist as saying, "You know, language has got us licked. The score is language, one billion, linguists, zero."[21]

The second constant in the ongoing procession of language theories is that it has little effect on the ideas that people use words to shape.[22] Caputo grants this, at least in part.

> To the age old dispute between belief and unbelief, deconstruction comes equipped with a kind of armed neutrality. [It] neither includes nor excludes the existence of any positive entity. There is nothing about deconstruction...that affirms or falsifies the claims of faith; nothing that confirms or denies the claims of physiological reductionists who see there only the marvellous promptings not of the Spirit, but of certain neurotransmitters.[23]

This claimed neutrality, though, is deceptive, for in our materialistic age, deconstruction's "heightened sense of suspicion about the constructedness of our discourse" (Caputo) works more against intangibles than against neurotransmitters.

Practically speaking, this places Derrida in the camp of the massed powers of cognition that oppose the human spirit today. When Saul Bellow tells us that[24]

> the value of literature lies in "true impressions." A novel moves back and forth between the world of objects, of actions, of appearances, and that other world, from which these "true impressions" come and which moves us to believe that the good we hang on to so tenaciously— in the face of evil, so obstinately— is no illusion.

When (as I say) an artist expresses such views, religionists take him at his word, but not Derrida. His "heightened sense of suspicion" will not allow "presences"— his word for Bellow's "true impressions"— to be accepted at face value.[25]

Some things do need to be deconstructed. Scientism needs all the deconstructing it can get, and the Buddha's deconstruction of the empirical ego by showing it to be a composite of *skandas* that derive from *pratitya-samutpada* (co-dependent origination) is a marvel of psychological analysis. But the Buddha tore down in order to rebuild; specifically to show that "utter [phenomenal] groundlessness (nonbeing) is equivalent to full groundedness (being)."[26] Likewise Pseudo-Dionysius. No one saw more clearly than he that "the intelligence must interpret, correct, straighten out, 'reduce', and deny the images, forms, and schemes in which are materially represented the divine realities they are unable to contain." But this "radical critique and rejection by the intelligence of each of the [Divine] names that are more or less accessible to it indicate definite steps *forward* of this same intelligence *in the direction of its own divinization.*[27] One looks in vain for anything approaching such exalted issues from Derrida's dismantlings. They look like the latest brand of our century-long hermeneutics of suspicion, mounted this time linguistically.

I fear that in giving the space that I have to Derrida my wish to come to grips with at least one instance of Postmodernism may have drawn me too far into his circle, for hand to hand combat never avails against these philosophers; their minds are too agile. So before proceeding to Postmodernism's religious alternative, I shall drop my dirk, back off a distance and aim a javelin at the premises from which the philosophers work. For in Yogi Berra's aphorism, they make the wrong mistake. Misjudging what our times require, they provide brilliant answers to the wrong question.

Already at the opening of this century Yeats was warning that things were falling apart, that the centre didn't hold. Gertrude Stein followed him by noting that "in the twentieth century nothing is in agreement with anything else," and Ezra Pound saw man as "hurling himself at indomitable chaos"— the most durable line from the play Green Pastures has been, "Everything that's tied down is coming loose." It is not surprising, therefore, that when in her last interview Rebecca West was asked to name the dominant mood of our time, she replied, "A desperate search for a pattern." The search is desperate because it seems futile to look for a pattern when reality has become, in Roland Barth's vivid image, kaleidoscopic. With every tick of the clock the pieces of experience come down in new array.

This is what we are up against, *this* is what Postmodernity is: the balkanization of life and thought. Perpetual becoming is preying on us like a deadly sickness, and (deaf to E. M. Forster counsel, "only connect") Postmoderns think that more differences, (and the increased fragmentation, distractions and dispersions these produce) is what we need. If we could replay at fast speed a videotape of our century's social and conceptual earthquakes, we would see the deconstructionists scurrying around like madmen in hardhats, frantically looking for places where a little more demolition and destabilization might prove useful.[28] Here Dr. Ahmed's analysis of Postmodernity fits perfectly, for after defining it as "a rejection of the world as a universal totality," he proceeds immediately to note that "the media provide its central dynamic" Postmodernism and the media reinforce each other through their common interest in difference, for novelty— sequential difference— is the media's life blood. Nothing is so important but that in three days it will not be replaced by headlines reporting what happens next, however trivial it may be. Is anything more interesting than what's going on!

In turning now to Postmodernism's religious alternative, I shall continue to speak of it in the singular and simply assume what I argued in *Forgotten Truth*; namely, that a common metaphysical "spine" underlies the differences in the theologies of the classical languages of the human soul, the world's great religions.[29] Tackling in reverse order the three modes of Postmodernism that I delineated earlier, I shall report as straightforwardly as I can— there won't be much time for supporting arguments— the religious claims that people need worldviews, that reliable ones are possible, and that they already exist.

RELIGION'S RESPONSE TO POST MODERNISM

1. Worldviews are Needed

As religions are worldviews or metanarratives— inclusive posits concerning the ultimate nature of things— its custodians cannot accept polemical Postmodernism's contention that on balance they oppress. George Will has observed that "the magic word of modernity is 'society;" and the present case bears him out, for it is almost entirely for their social repercussions that Postmoderns fault worldviews.[30] In applying that measuring rod they simply assume (they do not argue) that religion does more harm than good. That this runs counter to social science functionalism, which holds that institutions don't survive unless they serve social needs, is conveniently overlooked,[31] but the deeper point is that the vertical dimension— the way religion feeds the human soul in its inwardness and solitude— gets little attention.

When the personal and private dimension of life (which intersects the vertical) is validated, it is not difficult to see the function that worldviews serve. Minds require echoniches as much as organisms do, and the mind's echoniche is its worldview, its sense of the whole of things, however much or little that sense is articulated. Short of madness, there is *some* fit between the two, and we constantly try to improve the fit. Signs of a poor fit are the sense of meaninglessness, alienation, and in acute cases anxiety, which Postmodernity knows so well. The proof of a good fit is that life and the world make sense. When the fit feels perfect, the energies of the cosmos pour into the believer and empower him to startling degree. He knows that he belongs, and this produces an inner wholeness that is strong for being consonant with the wholeness of the All. The very notion of an All is a red flag to deconstructionists for seeming to disallow alterity; and in a sense it does disallow it, for, being whole, God cannot be exclusive. But as God's inclusiveness is unique in including all the "otherness" there is— God's infinity is all-possibility— alterity is allowed as much room as it can logically have.

One would think that Postmodern theologians, at least, would honour this sense of ultimate belonging that religion bestows. Heirs, though, to modernity, they too have adopted "society" as their watchword, allowing social considerations to upstage ontological ones. Both absolutism and relativism have bright and shadow sides. The virtue of the Absolute is the power it offers the soul; its danger is the fanaticism into which the power can narrow. In the case of relativism, its virtue is tolerance, and nihilism is its shadow side. Where social considerations predominate it is the dark side of absolutism (fanaticism) and the bright side of relativism (tolerance) that are noticed, these being their social components. In both cases, the vertical dimensions— which would reverse our estimates of the two— are underplayed if not ignored.

2. Worldviews are Possible

In proceeding from the need for worldviews to their possibility, I have in mind of course the possibility of *valid* worldviews, not castles in the air. The religious claim that the human mind has access to such views challenges *mainline*

Postmodernism in the way its preceding claim— that worldviews are needed— challenged Postmodernism's polemical stance.

Mainline Postmodernism takes its stand on human finitude, arguing that as finite minds are no match for the infinite, there can be no fit between the two. What gets overlooked in this disjunction is the subtleties that finitude admits of: its degrees, modes, and paradoxes. With its *fana, anatta, and maya*, religion ultimately denies that finitude, as such, exists. Postmodernism cannot comprehend that, any more than it can comprehend the other side of the paradox: that finitude hosts the Atman, Buddha-nature, *imago dei*, Uncreated Intellect, and Universal Man. God alone exists, and everything that exists is God.

These are difficult concepts, so I reach for analogies. A wisp of spray is not the ocean, but the two are identically water. Or if we imagine an infinite lump of clay that tapers into tentacles and then into filaments that dwindle toward nothingness, the final tips of those filaments are still clay. To the religious spirit, such thoughts can serve as powerful spring-boards in suggesting our connectedness to God. Which connectedness— this is the immediate point— has epistemic implications. Postmoderns burlesque those who protest the cramped, Postmodern view of the mind, charging them with claiming that the human mind is capable of a God's eye-view of things, as if omniscience were the only alternative to Kant's categories. Worldviews are human views, which means that they conform to human modes of thought in the way a bird's-eye view of the world honours its modes. But Blake's dictum is decisive here: "I see through my eyes, not with them." That the world, taken as the whole of things, looks different to God and other species than it does to us does not prevent there being better and worse, right and wrong ways that human beings take it to be. In a subordinate sense, the right way includes many right ways— as many as appropriately different ways of being human decree. Differences in the world's great theologies provide an important instance of this, but here the point is that mistakes are possible and do occur, Postmodernism being one of them.

The components of Postmodern epistemology that work most heavily to obscure the realization that there can be valid overviews are two: perspectivalism carried to the point of absurdity; and a mundane, humdrum conception of knowledge.[32]

Perspectivalism becomes absurd when the obvious fact that we look at the world from different places, hence different angles, is transformed into the dogma that we therefore cannot know things as they actually are. For Kant, it was our human angle (the categories of the mind) that prevents us from knowing "things in themselves;" and when psychological, cultural, temporal, and linguistic filters are added to this generic, anthropological one, we get constructivism, cultural relativism, historicism, and cultural-linguistic holism respectively. What dogmatic perspectivalism in all these modes overlooks is that to recognize that perspectives are such requires knowing to some extent the wholes that demote them to that status. Without this recognition, each "take" (as they say in movie making) would be accepted as the thing in itself. Visually, we need only move around the room to get a sense of the whole that shows our perspectives to be no more than such; but the mind is a dexterous instrument and can put itself "in other peoples' shoes," as we say.[33] When the shoes belong to strangers, we transcend cultural relativism; when they are removed in time we transcend all-or-nothing historicism. When this is pointed out to Postmoderns they again burlesque, charging their informants with claiming to be able to climb out of their skins, or (in the case of time) hopping a helicopter for past epochs. Both images are self-serving by pointing their spatial analogies in the wrong direction. The alternative to perspectivalism is not to get out of one-self or one's times, but to go into oneself until one reaches things that are time*less* and elude space altogether.

As for Postmodern epistemology, this too was initiated by Kant who argued that knowledge is always a synthesis of our concepts with something that presents itself to those concepts. (We can think of a tree as an object without knowing whether there is such an object until we confront something that fits our concept of a tree). An important question for worldviews is whether human beings have faculties, analogous to their sense receptors, for detecting immaterial, spiritual objects. Kant thought not, and epistemology has largely gone along with his opinion; but religion disagrees. There is no objective way of adjudicating the dispute, for each side has its own definition of objectivity. For science, common sense, and Postmodernism, objective knowledge where it is countenanced is knowledge that commends itself to everyone because it turns, finally, on sense reports that people agree on. Religious epistemology, on the other hand, defines objective knowledge as adequation to the real. When the real in question is spiritual in character, special faculties are required. These need to be developed and kept in working order.

Unencumbered by run-of-the-mill epistemology and perspectivalism gone haywire, religions accept their worldviews as their absolutes, which is to say, as true. That word is no more acceptable to post-moderns than "all" is; Wittgenstein prefigured the shift from modernity to Postmodernity when he characterized his turn from his early to his late period as a shift from truth to meaning. Here again the post-modern preoccupation with social matters obtrudes, for the fanatical impulse to cram truth down other people's throats leads Postmoderns to back off from truth in general, especially if it is capitalized. In so doing they overlook the fact that truth is falliblism's prerequisite, not its alternative. Where there is no via (way, truth) to deviate from, mistakes have no meaning.[34]

Working my way backwards through Postmodernism's three versions, I come lastly to its minimal claim which simply reports that we have no believable worldview today. "We have no maps, and we don't know how to make them" is the way one of the author's of *The Good Society* states the point.[35]

Whereas the two stronger versions of post-modernism need to be challenged for interfering with the human spirit, this minimalist position, being at the root a description, poses no real problem. The description can, though, be qualified somewhat. In saying that we have no maps, the "we" in the minimalist's assertion refers to Western intellectuals. Peoples whose minds have not been reshaped by modernity and its sequel continue to live by the maps of their revelations.

Prone to assume that maps must be believed fanatically if they are to be believed at all, polemical Postmoderns condemn religions for fomenting disharmony. But it is useful here to refer back for a last time to Dr Ahmed's characterizations of Postmodernity, which include its being "paired with ethno-religious fundamentalism". Postmoderns over-look that pairing. They do not perceive the extent to which their styles of thought (with the dangers of relativism and nihilism they conceal) have *produced* fundamentalism; which fundamentalism is the breeding ground for the fanaticism and intolerance they rightly deplore.

If mainline and polemical Postmodernism were to recede, the obsession with life's social dimension that they saddled us with would relax and we would find ourselves able to think ontologically again. An important consequence of this would be that we would then perceive how much religious outlooks have in common. For one thing, they all situate the manifest, visible world within a larger, invisible whole. This is of particular interest at the moment because currently science does the same. Dark matter doesn't impact any of science's detectors, and the current recipe for the universe is "70 parts cold dark matter, about 30 parts hot dark matter, and just a pinch for all the rest— the matter detectable to scientific instruments."[36] The further unanimous claim of religious cosmologies, though, finds no echo in science, for (being a value judgement) it is beyond science's reach. Not only is the invisible real; regions of it are more real and of greater worth than the visible, material world.

The inclusive, presiding paradigm for traditional cosmologies is the Great Chain of Being, composed of links ranging in hierarchical order from meagre existents up to the *ens perfectissimum*; and the foremost student of that concept, Arthur Lovejoy, reported that "most educated persons everywhere accepted [it] without question down to late in the eighteenth century."[37] To that endorsement, Ken Wilber has recently added that the Great Chain of Being is "so overwhelmingly widespread...that it is either the single greatest intellectual error ever to appear in humankind's history— an error so colossally widespread as to literally stagger the mind— or it is the single most accurate reflection of reality yet to appear."[38]

CONCLUSION

To propose that religions cash in their theological metanarratives for metaphysical similarities they share would be as absurd as to urge people to peel off their flesh so the similarities of their skeletons could come to light. But if the warfare between science and religion could wind down, religions might find themselves co-existing relatively happily within a minimally articulated metanarrative of faith that encompassed them all in the way the eight current models of the quantum world share the context of what quantum physicists in general agree on. Or in the way in which, in the modern period, competing scientific theories shared the metanarrative of the scientific worldview.

Were this to happen, the atmosphere would be more salubrious, for I know no one who thinks that the Postmodern view of the self and its world are nobler than the ones that the world's religions proclaim. Postmoderns acquiesce to their dilapidated views, not because they like them, but because they think that reason and human historicity now force them upon us.

It has been the burden of my remarks that this is not the case.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] I am indebted to Professor M. L. Vanessa Vogel for her helpful suggestions after reading an early draft of this essay.

[2] Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 10-28.

[4] This important point is not generally recognized, so I shall spell it out. The death-knell to modernity, which had science as its source and hope, was sounded with the realization that despite its power in limited regions, six things slip through its controlled experiments in the way sea slips through the nets of fishermen:

1. *Values.* Science can deal with descriptive and instrumental values, but not with intrinsic and normative ones.
2. *Meanings.* Science can work with cognitive meanings, but not with existential meanings (Is X meaningful?), or ultimate ones (What is the meaning of life?).
3. *Purposes.* Science can handle teleonomy– purposiveness in organisms– but not teleology, final causes.
4. *Qualities.* Quantities science is good at, but not qualities.
5. *The invisible and the immaterial.* It can work with invisibles that are rigorously entailed by matter's behaviour (the movements of iron filings that require magnetic fields to account for them, e.g.) but not with others.
6. *Our superiors, if such exist.* This limitation does not prove that beings greater than ourselves exist, but it does leave the question open, for "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence".

[5] Ernest Gellner defines Postmodernism as relativism– "*relativismus über Alles*" (*Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*)– but relativism is not an easy position to defend, so postmoderns do everything they can to avoid that label; Clifford Geertz's "anti-antirelativism" is a case in point. The T-shirts that blossomed on the final day of a six-week, 1987 NEH Institute probably tell the story. Superimposed on a slashed circle,

their logo read, "No cheap relativism". By squirming, postmoderns can parry crude relativisms, but sophisticated relativism is still relativism. Postmoderns resist that conclusion, however, so I shall stay with their own self-characterization.

[6] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984), pp. xxiv, 3ff.

[7] Alan Wallace, *Choosing Reality* (Boston and Shaftsbury: Shambala, 1989).

[8] No textbook in science has ever included things that are intrinsically greater than human beings. Bigger, of course, and wielding more physical power, but not superior in the full sense of that term which includes virtues, such as intelligence, compassion, and bliss.

[9] To highlight the opposition between Postmodernism and religion, I am intentionally tabling in this statement the differences among religions that I explored in my *Essays on World Religions* (New York: Paragon House, 1992).

[10] This article was written by the author in 1994. (Ed.)

[11] In Richard Kearney, *Dialogue with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 123-24.

[12] One has to read quite a way to learn that this does not mean what it says. It means [per Rodolphe Gasche, *Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 281] that "nothing outside the text can, like a last reason, assume a *fulfilling function*," which in itself is not the plainest way of saying that there is nothing outside a text that determines that it has only one plausible meaning.

[13] John Caputo, "Good News about Alterity: Derrida and Theology" in *Faith and Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 453.

[14] Walt Anderson, *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 87.

[15] See Jacques Derrida, "A Number of Yes," translated by Brian Holmes, *Qui Parle* 2 (1988), pp. 120-33.

[16] In Richard Kearney, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

[17] John Caputo, ibid.

[18] Metanarratives (or worldviews) other than the one in question can exist, but not as such; which is to say, not (from the position of the one in question) as true. Worlds are not made for one another. The words

Worldviews, Absolute, and Truth are mutually implicated.

[19] Caputo develops this connection. "Although Derrida is not a religious writer, and does not, as far as I know, hold any religious views, his thought seems to me in no small part driven by a kind of biblical sensitivity, let us say a hyperbolic hypersensitivity, to the demands of the other, to the claims laid upon us by the different one, of the one who is left out or cast out, who lacks a voice or hearing, a standing or stature" (ibid., p. 466).

[20] John Caputo, ibid., p. 454, 457.

[21] In David Berreby's review of Randy Allen Harris, *The Linguistic Wars* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) in *The Sciences*, January/February, 1994, p. 49.

[22] There was a dramatic moment in the December 1980 meeting of the American Philosophical Association when Richard Rorty pressed his critics to offer examples of cases "where some philosophical inquiry into conceptual foundations of X provided any furtherance of our understanding of X." Many think that his challenge has not been met, and it is time (it seems to me) to put the same challenge to deconstruction. Confining our self to this essay's concern, is there a single passage in the Hebrew canon (say) whose religious message can be deepened by deploying skills that Derrida possesses, but rabbis through the ages lacked?

[23] John Caputo, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

[24] Saul Bellow, *It All Adds Up* (New York: Viking, 1994), p. 97.

[25] This exaltation of method over intuitive discernments is an academic disease of our times: in the case at hand, "presences" are rendered suspect, and confidence is shifted to the deconstructive method. But "if the optic nerve has to be examined in order to be sure that vision is real, it will be necessary to examine that which examines the optic nerve; an absurdity which proves in its own indirect way that knowledge of suprasensible things is intuitive and cannot be other than intuitive." (Frithjof Schuon).

[26] David Loy, "Avoiding the Void: The Lack of Self in Psychotherapy and Buddhism," *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 24, no. 2, p. 153.

[27] Rene Roques, preface to *Pseudo-Dionysius* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 7, 6). Emphasis added.

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[28] "The point of deconstruction is to loosen and unlock structures...to allow [things] to function more freely...open-endedly. It warns against letting [things] close over or shut down, for this would imprison something in systems which struggles to twist free" (Caputo, 456-57). What, specifically?

[29] Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth, The Common Vision of the World's Religions,* Harper San Francisco, San Francisco: 1976/1992 (repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1984, 2002)

[30] The break up of colonialism following World War II got mixed up with Marx's hermeneutic of suspicion in a curious and unfortunate way. Marx was able to show quite convincingly that much of what capitalists took for truth was actually ideology– but his successors slipped into assuming that because the capitalists thought their truth was objective and they oppressed people, belief in objective truth must be a cause of oppression. No Descartes, no imperialism. There is great irony here, for Marx mounted his hermeneutics of suspicion to clear the ground for his view of things which he considered objective. His stratagems, though, were powerful and took on a life of their own. Eventually, (with help from Nietzsche, Freud, and others) they turned against their fathers by undermining confidence in objective truth generally.

Parenthetically but importantly: that knowledge (to the degree that it is such) is objective, and that objectivity is not fully such if the context that insures it is less than inclusive are momentous points; but in this essay I can only assume them, there being insufficient space to argue for them.

[31] On survival, we have Clifford Geertz's report that "though it is not logically impossible for a people to have [no] metaphysics, we do not seem to have found such a people" ("Ethos, World-View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols", *Antioch Review* [1957], p. 338).

[32] For a reasoned presentation of these two important points which I can only mention here, see the section titled "Two Dogmas of Scepticism Concerning Spiritual Reality," in Donald Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993).

[33] This, of course, is precisely what Postmodern anthropologists deny. The discipline that began as the effort to learn about other peoples and cultures now obsesses over the impossibility of that project. Anthropologists now evidence their seriousness by recognizing that

"facts" about other peoples are only superficially such. When the ever-shifting, culture-bound, contradictory and deserving-of-deconstruction meanings of the natives interface with the anthropologists' meanings that partake of the same problems, what hope is there for minds to meet? Those who seek such meetings are reduced to reporting the anguish of their field experiences in which they and their subjects try to break out of their respective islands and reach out to one another, with failure built into the project from its start.

[34] Robert Kane's *Through the Moral Maze: Searching for Absolute Values in a Pluralistic World* (New York: Paragon House, 1994) makes this point convincingly.

[35] Richard Madsen, one of the authors of *The Good Society*, Robert Bellah et al. (New York: Knopf, 1991).

[36] *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 October 1992, A 16.

[37] Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 59. Ernst Cassirer corroborates Lovejoy on this point: "The most important legacy of ancient speculation was the concept and general picture of a graduated cosmos" (*Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 9).

[38] Ken Wilber, "The Great Chain of Being," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 33 no. 3 (summer 1993), p. 53.

CREATION OF THE WORLD AND OF HUMAN BEINGS*

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Since the One God is Infinite and Absolute as well as the Infinitely Good, He could not but create. His infinitude implies that He contains within Himself all possibilities, including that of negating Himself, and this possibility had to be realized in the form of creation. Moreover, as St. Augustine also stated, it is in the nature of the good to give of itself, and the Infinitely-Good could not but radiate the reality that constitutes the world and, in fact, all the worlds.

But creation or radiation implies separation, and it is this ontological separation from the Source of all goodness that constitutes evil. One might say that evil is nothing but separation from the Good and privation, although it is real on its own level, in a sense as real as our own existential level on which we find it. And yet the good belongs to the pole of being and evil to that of nonbeing.

Throughout the history of Islam there have been numerous profound metaphysical and theological discussions concerning the question of evil, as there have been in other religions, especially Christianity. But in contrast to the modern West, in which many people have turned away from God and religion because they could not understand how a God who is good could create a world in which there is evil, in the Islamic world this question of theodicy has hardly ever bothered the religious conscience of even the most intelligent people or turned them away from God. The emphasis of the Qur'ān upon the reality of evil on the moral plane combined with the sapiential and theological explanations of this question have kept men and women confronted with this problem in the domain of faith. The strong emphasis in Islam on the Will of God has also played a role in resigning Muslims to the presence of evil in the world (which they must nevertheless combat to the extent possible), even when they cannot understand the causes involved.

In any case, God has created the world, in which there is imperfection and evil, but the world itself is considered by the Qur'ān to be good, a view corresponding to that found in the book of Genesis. And creation has a purpose, for, as the Qur'ān says, "O Lord, Thou didst not create this [the world] in vain" (8:190). The deepest purpose of creation is explained by a famous *ḥadīth qudsī* (a sacred saying of the Prophet not part of the Qur'ān in which God speaks in the first person through the mouth of the Prophet): "I was a hidden treasure. I loved to be known. Therefore, I created the creation so that I would be known." The purpose of creation therefore is God's love for the knowledge of Him-self realized through His central agent on earth, humanity. For a human being to know God is to fulfil the purpose of creation. Moreover, God loved to be known. Hence, the love of God and by God permeates the whole universe, and many Islamic mystics of Sufis over the ages have spoken of that love to which Dante refers at the end of the *Divine Comedy* when he speaks of "the love that moves the sun and the stars."

This sacred *ḥadīth* (*ḥadīth qudsī*) also speaks of God's being "a hidden treasure," which is a symbol of the truth that everything in the universe has its origin in the Divine Reality and is a manifestation of that Reality. Everything in the total cosmos both visible and invisible is a theophany, or manifestation, of the Divine Names and Qualities and is drawn from the "treasury" of God. The Wisdom of God thus permeates the universe, and Muslims in fact see the cosmos as God's primordial revelation. Everything in the universe, in reflecting God's Wisdom, also glorifies Him, for, as the Qur'ān says, "There is nothing but that it hymns His praise" (17:44). In fact, the very existence of beings is nothing but their invocation of God's Names, and the universe itself is nothing but the consequence of the breathing upon the archetypal realities of all beings in the Divine Intellect of the Breath of the Compassionate (*nafas al-Raḥmān*). It is through His Name *al-Raḥmān*, which means the Infinitely-Good and also Merciful, that the universe has come into being. It is significant to note that much of the Qur'ān is devoted to the cosmos and the world of nature, which play an integral role in the traditional life of Muslims. All Islamic rites are harmonized with natural phenomena, and in general Muslims view the world of creation as God's first revelation, before the Torah, the Gospels, the Qur'an, and other sacred scriptures were revealed. That is why in Islam, as in medieval Judaism and Christianity, the cosmos is seen as a book in which the "signs of God," the *vestigia Dei* of Christian authors, are to be read.

The Islamic understanding of anthropogenesis, the creation of human beings, resembles those of Judaism and Christianity in many ways, but also differs on certain significant issues. In fact, there are also important differences between Judaism and Christianity when it comes to the question of original sin. As for Adam's original creation, the Qur'ān speaks of God creating Adam from clay and breathing His Spirit into him, "And I breathed into him My Spirit" (15:29). The Qur'ān continues:

> And when thy Lord said unto the angels: "Verily! I am about to place a vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth," they said, "Wilt Thou place therein one who will bring corruption therein and will

> shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee?"
> He said: "Surely, I know that which ye know not."
> And He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: "Inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful."
> They said: "Be glorified! We have no knowledge save that which Thou halt taught us." (2:30–32)

The angels were then asked by God to prostrate before Adam, and all did so except Iblīs, that is, the Devil or Satan, who refused because of pride. God placed Adam and his wife in paradise and permitted them to eat of the fruits there, except the fruit of the forbidden tree. But Satan "caused them to deflect there from," and the Fall ensued. But a revelation was sent to Adam. He repented and be-came the first prophet as well as the father of humanity.

The Qur'anic account contains all the main features of the sacred anthropology of Islam and its view of the nature of men and women. First of all, God chose the human being as His vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on earth, which means that He has given human beings power to dominate the earth, but on the condition that they remain obedient to God, that is, being God's servant, or *ʿabd Allah*. There are numerous Qur'anic references to this truth. The two primary features of being human are servanthood and vicegerency: being passive toward Heaven in submission to God's Will, on the one hand, and being active as God's agent and doing His Will in the world, on the other. Moreover, Adam was taught all the names, which means that God has placed within human nature an intelligence that is central and the means by which he can know all things. It also means that human beings themselves are the theophany, or visible manifestation, of all of God's Names. There is in principle no limit to human intelligence in knowing the nature of things (the question of knowing the Divine Essence is a different matter) unless there is an obstacle that prevents it from functioning correctly. That is why Muslims believe that any normal and wholesome intelligence will be naturally led to the confirmation of Divine Oneness and are at a loss when rationalist sceptics from the West refuse to accept the One (most Muslims are unaware of the obstacles in the soul of such a sceptic that reduce the intelligence to analytical reason and prevent it from functioning in its fullness). Adam, the prototype of humanity, is superior to the angels by virtue of his knowledge of the names of all things as well as by being the reflection of all the Divine Names and Qualities.

As for Iblīs, his rebellion comes from pride in considering his nature, which was made of fire, superior to that of Adam, who was made of clay. He refused to prostrate him-self before Adam, because fire is a more noble element than earth or clay. He could not see the effect of the Spirit that God had breathed into Adam. Satan was therefore the first to misuse analogy, to try to replace intelligence with ordinary logical reasoning. His fall was thus also connected to the domain of knowledge. The lack of total knowledge on his part created the sense of pride, which in Islam, as in Christianity, is the source of all other vices.

The Qur’ān mentions Adam’s wife, but not her name. ḥadīth sources however confirm that her name was Hawwa’, or Eve. In fact, the Islamic names for the first parents of humanity, Adam and Hawwa’, are the same as in Judaism and Christianity. The Qur’an, however, does not mention how she was created. Some traditional commentators have repeated the biblical account of her creation from Adam’s rib, while other authorities have mentioned that she was created from the same clay from which God created Adam. It is important to note for the Islamic understanding of womanhood and women’s roles in both religious and social life that, in contrast to the biblical story, Eve did not tempt Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. Rather, they were tempted together by Iblīs and therefore Eve was not the cause of Adam’s expulsion from paradise. He was also responsible; they shared in performing the act that led to their fall, and therefore both men and women are faced equally with its consequences. As far as the forbidden fruit is concerned, again, the Qur'ān does not mention it explicitly, but according to traditional commentaries it was not an apple, as believed by Christians and Jews, but wheat.

The creation of human beings complements the creation of the cosmos and adds to the created order a central being who is God's vicegerent, capable of knowing all things, of dominating the earth, given the power to do good, but also to wreak havoc and, in fact, corrupt the earth. According to a famous *ḥadīth*, "God created man upon His form," although here form does not mean physical image, but rather the reflection of God's Names and Qualities. But human beings are also given the freedom to rebel against God, and Iblīs can exercise power over them. The human being contains, in fact, all possibilities within himself or herself. The soul itself is a vast field in which the signs of God are manifested. As a Qur'anic verse states, "We shall show them our signs (*āyāt*) upon the horizons and within their souls until it becomes manifest unto them that it is the truth" (41:53). Therefore, in a sense, the human being is itself a revelation like the macrocosm.

It might be said that from the Islamic point of view creation and revelation are inseparable, and that there are in fact three grand revelations: the cosmos, the human state, and religions—all three of which Islam sees as "books." There is, first of all, the cosmic book to be read and deciphered. Then there is the inner book of the soul, which we carry within "ourselves. And finally there are sacred scriptures, which have been sent by God through His Mercy to guide humanity throughout the ages and which are the foundations of various religions and keys for reading the other two books, that of the cosmos and that of the soul.

Many Revelations, Many Prophets

In the Islamic perspective, the oneness of God has as its consequence not the uniqueness of prophecy, but its multiplicity, since God as the Infinite created a world in which there is multiplicity and this includes, of course, the human order. For Islam, revelation and prophecy are both necessary and universal. Humanity, according to the Qur'an, was created from a single soul, but then diversified into races and tribes, for, as the Qur'ān states, "He created you [humanity] from a single soul" (39:6). The single origin of humanity implies the profound unity within diversity of human nature, and therefore religion based on the message of Divine Oneness could not have been only meant for or available to a segment of humanity. The multiplicity of races, nations, and tribes necessitates the diversity of revelations. Therefore, the Qur'an, on the one hand, asserts that "To every people [We have sent] a messenger" (10:48), and, on the other hand, "For each [people] We have appointed a Divine Law and a way. Had God willed, He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you. So vie with one another in good works. Unto God ye will all return, and He will then inform you concerning that wherein ye differed" (5:48). According to these and other verses, not only is the multiplicity of religions necessary, but it is also a reflection of the richness of the Divine Nature and is willed by God.

Religion (*dīn*), revelation (*waḥy*), and prophecy (*nubuwwah*) have a clear meaning in the context of the Islamic worldview and therefore need to be carefully defined in the modern context, where all of these terms have become ambiguous in ordinary discourse. The closest word to the English term "religion" in Arabic is *dīn*, which is said by many to have been derived from the root meaning "to obey, submit, and humble oneself before God." *Al-dīn* means religion in the vastest sense as the sacred norm into which the whole of life is to be moulded. It is the total way of life grounded in teachings that have issued from God.

These teachings reach humanity through revelation, which means the direct conveying of a message from Heaven (revelation being understood apart from all the psychological entanglements it has acquired in much of modern Western religious thought). Revelation, moreover, must not be confused with inspiration (*ilhām*), which is possible for all human beings.

Islam sees revelation not as incarnation in the Hindu or Christian sense, but as the descent of the Word of God in the form of sacred scripture to a prophet. In fact, the Qur'ān uses the term "Book" (*kitāb*) not only for the Qur'an, but also for all other sacred books and the totality of revelations. The Qur'ān considers all revelations to be contained in that "archetypal book," or *Umm al-kitāb* (literally, "the Mother Book"), and the sacred scriptures to be related in conveying the same basic message of the primordial religion of unity in different languages and contexts. As the Qur'ān states, "We never sent a messenger save with the language of his people" (14:4). Even when the Qur'ān states that "the religion with God is *al-islām*" (3:19) or similar statements, *al-islām* refers to that universal surrender to the One and that primordial religion contained in the heart of all heavenly inspired religions, not just to Islam in its more particular sense. There is, moreover, a criterion of truth and falsehood as far as religions are concerned, and the Qur'an's confirmation of the universality of revelation does not mean that everything that has passed as religion yesterday or does so today is authentic. Throughout history there have been false prophets and religions, to which Christ also referred, as well as religions that have decayed or deviated from their original form.

Islam sees itself as heir to this long chain of prophets going back to Adam and believes all of them, considered to be 124,000 according to tradition, to be also its own. It does not believe, however, that it has inherited their teachings through temporal and historical transmission, for a prophet owes nothing to anyone and receives everything from Heaven, but it does believe that its message bears the finality of a seal. Islam sees itself as at once the primordial religion, a return to the original religion of oneness, and the final religion; the Qur'ān itself calls the Prophet of Islam the "Seal of Prophets." And, in fact, fourteen hundred years of history have confirmed Islam's claim, for during all that time there has not been another plenary manifestation of the Truth like the ones that brought about the births of Buddhism and Christianity, not to speak of the earlier major religions. The two characteristics of primordiality and finality have bestowed upon Islam its trait of universality and the capability to absorb intellectually and culturally so much that came before it. It has also made spiritually alive the prophetic presences that preceded it, so that, for example, such figures as Abraham, Moses, and Christ play a much greater role in the spiritual universe of Islam than Abraham and Moses do in the Christian universe.

While speaking of the finality of the Islamic revelation for this cycle of human history, which will last until the eschatological events at the end of historic time, something must be said, from the Islamic point of view, about the "order" and "economy" of revelation. Muslims believe that each revelation takes place through the Divine Will, but also on the basis of a spiritual economy and is not by any means ad hoc. Each revelation fulfils a major function in human history seen from the religious point of view. For example, around the sixth to fifth century B.C. which also marks the transition from mythological time to historic time, a qualitative change took place in the march of time, which for Islam, as for Hinduism, is not simply linear. This is the period when the myths of Homer and Hesiod recede as Greek history flowers and the stories of mythical Persian dynasties are left behind as the Persian Empire takes shape. From the human point of view, this qualitative change in the terrestrial life of humanity required new dispensations from Heaven, and from the metaphysical perspective, these new dispensations themselves marked the new chapter that was to begin in human history.

This period, which philosophers such as Karl Jaspers have called the Axial Age, was witness to the appearance of Confucius and Lao-Tze in China and the new crystallization of the primal Chinese tradition into Confucianism and Taoism, and the appearance of Shintoism in Japan and the beginning of the terrestrial life of the solar emperors, who marked the beginning of historical Japanese civilization. This age was also witness to the life of the Buddha, whose teaching spread throughout India and Tibet and soon transformed the religious life of East and Southeast Asia. At nearly the same time, we see the rise of Zoroaster, who established Zoroastrianism in Persia and whose teachings greatly influenced later religious life in western Asia. Finally, around the same time we have the rise of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism, which was central to the spiritual life of ancient Greece and from which Platonism was born. This remarkable cluster of figures, which also includes some of the Hebrew prophets, figures whom Muslims would call prophets, transformed the religious life of humanity, although the still living and viable religions of the earlier period such as Judaism and Hinduism survived. Moreover, this list of figures does not exhaust all the notable sages and prophets of the Axial Age.

One would think that the cycle of revelation would have been terminated in the Axial Age. But the decadence of the Greek and Roman religions around the Mediterranean Basin and the weakening of the northern European religions created a vacuum that only a new revelation could fill. Therefore Christianity was revealed by God. Although originally a Semitic religion, providentially it soon became, to some extent, Hellenized, and Christ was transformed almost into an "Aryan" solar hero for the Europeans, who were destined to find the path of salvation through this new dispensation from Heaven. It certainly was no accident that in Europe Christianity remained strong and unified, while in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, destined to become part of the future "Abode of Islam," it splintered into numerous small denominations fighting among themselves as well as against Byzantium.

This latter situation, added to the inner weakness of Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire and certain other religions elsewhere, created another vacuum to be filled, this time by a new Semitic religion—Islam. Islam, like Judaism, remained faithful to its Semitic origin, but, like Christianity, was not confined to a particular ethnic group. Islam thus came to reassert the full doctrine of Divine Oneness on a universal scale after the Axial Age and the appearance of Christianity, placing in a sense the last golden brick in that golden wall that is revelation. With it, the structure of the wall became complete, and, as far as Muslims are concerned, although small religious movements may take place here and there, there is to be no plenary revelation after Islam according to the Divine Providence and the spiritual economy of God's plans for present-day humanity. When asked how they know such a truth, Muslims point to the Qur'ān itself and the fact that no previous revelation had ever made such an explicit claim. Being the final religion of this cycle, Islam is not only closely related to its sister monotheisms, Judaism and Christianity, but also possesses an inward link to the religions of the Axial Age as well as to Hinduism. It is this link that made it easier for Islam than for Christianity to incorporate so much of the wisdom Hinduism and of the religions of the Axial Age, from Buddhism and Pythagoreanism to Zoroastrianism and even later to Confucianism, within its sapiential perspective.

Paradoxically, the insistence of Islam upon God as the One and the Absolute has had as its concomitant the acceptance of multiplicity of prophets and revelations, and no sacred scripture is more universalist in its understanding of religion than the Qur'an, whose perspective concerning the universality of revelation may be called "vertical triumphalism." In contrast, in Christianity, because of the emphasis on the Triune God, God the One is seen more in terms of the relationality of the three Hypostases, what one might call "Divine Relativity"; the vision of the manifestation of the Divine then became confined to the unique Son and Incarnation, in whom the light of all previous prophets was absorbed. In Christianity the vision is that of the Triune God and a unique message of salvation and saviour, hence *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (no salvation outside the church), whereas in Islam there is the One God and many prophets. Here is to be found the major difference between how Muslims have viewed Jews and Christians over the centuries and how Christians have regarded Jews and Muslims as well as followers of other religions. For Muslims, the Qur'ān completes the message of previous sacred texts without in any way denigrating their significance. In fact, the Torah and the Gospels are mentioned by name as sacred scriptures along with the Qur'ān in the text of the Qur'an. Likewise, although the Prophet terminates the long chain of prophecy, the earlier prophets lose none of their spiritual significance. Rather, they appear in the Islamic firmament as stars, while the Prophet is like the moon in that Islamic sky.

* From Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values of Humanity.*

RELIGION AND RELIGIONS

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

The One cannot in the many but appear,
In creation as in these sacred forms,
Which, diverse in their outwardness,
Manifest a single inner Light, eternal.
I gazed upon Thy countenance in singleness,
How bewildered I am to behold Thy many Faces
now.

Throughout the ages human beings have lived upon an earth that was for them *the* Earth, even if it constituted but a part of the globe, and under a heaven that was for them Heaven as such symbolized by the vast azure vault of the sky stretching from east to west. They lived on the Earth as at once a reflection of Heaven, progenitor of life and the female consort of celestial realities, the ground from which life originates and the theatre from which it finally departs on its ultimate journey to the heavenly climes. There were on the earth other "Earths" wed to other "Heavens" of which human beings remained impervious until recent times and of which many, as yet not totally affected by the secularizing tides of modernism, remain unaware in a fundamental manner to this day.

It is only in these chaotic and turbulent times-when men and women, under whichever Heaven they happen to live, join those who have rejected the very notion of Heaven in its metaphysical, cosmological, and theological sense in destroying the Earth-that it is becoming incumbent to turn one's attention fully to the other Heavens and Earths that have determined the matrices of human existence over the millennia. As man succeeds in destroying so much of the order of nature and even threatens cosmic chaos of unprecedented proportions hardly imaginable just a century ago, it becomes necessary to turn to the other "Heavens" and "Earths" that have defined over the ages the *modus vivendi* of the many "humanities" which to an ever-greater extent are now unifying their efforts in the destruction of the natural order.

Although the crisis of the relationship between man and the world of nature on the scale observable today first began in the West where modernism was born, it is now global and demands an inquiry beyond the borders of the Western tradition[1] and the history of the attack against that tradition in modern times. Any inquiry into the question of the relation between religion and the order of nature, one that wishes to address the crucial issues emanating from the present day environmental crisis, needs to cross the frontiers of various spiritual universes and journey from the Heaven and Earth of a single human collectivity to the many Heavens and Earths of the several "humanities" constituting present-day global humanity as such.[2]

To understand the relation of religion to the order of nature on a global scale, rather than from the perspective of a single tradition, a task to which we address ourselves in this book, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the order of nature or the "Earth" in the context of various religions. And by virtue of the inalienable link between Earth and Heaven, it is essential to turn to sapiential and metaphysical teachings of the religions in question as contained in their traditional cosmologies. It is also necessary to comprehend the sense in which the many "Heavens" have crowned the cosmos of various humanities. One must understand the truth that various religions over the ages have encompassed both the Heaven and the Earth of the humanity for which these religions have been destined and have therefore determined the meaning of nature and the order pervading it for their followers. Any serious study of this question must therefore turn, before discussing the order of nature itself, to the crucial problem of how to study religion and religions in a world in which the reality of other religions must be taken seriously as never before.

Moreover, this condition holds true especially for studies carried out in those parts of the world that have become fully exposed to the rationalism, humanism, and relativism characteristic of modernism and postmodernism, such as the modern West on both sides of the Atlantic. Any study that does not consider seriously the truth claims of religions other than one's own or rejects all religious truth, including that of one's ancestral religion, on the basis of doubt and skepticism cannot claim to say much that is relevant, in the context of present-day environmental crisis, about the living relation between religion and the order of nature. Nor could a study that disregards the truth of religions on a global scale come to any conclusions that would have appreciable significance for the majority of human beings on the globe who still live within the matrix of a religious universe and yet are participating, usually in opposition to the teachings of their own traditions, in the destruction of nature and the disruption of the order that still continues to dominate over the world of nature in such a blinding fashion.[3]

Let us then turn before anything else to the question of how to study religions "religiously" and yet in a scholarly fashion, a task of utmost significance especially in Western academic circles where the study of religion during the past century has often been itself a highly unreligious, if not antireligious, activity. Needless to say, this vast question is a subject that needs to be treated separately in not one but many separate works, and in fact numerous voices in recent years have turned to it from different perspectives and with varying concerns.[4] Here, although we would wish to address ourselves to the major issues involved in this central question, it is necessary to confine our discussion in the light of our present subject to the order of nature and leave aside the vast ramifications and extensions of this question to other domains of religion.[5] We must seek to understand the Heaven of each spiritual universe along with its Earth in the light of our understanding of that Heaven.[6] How else can we grasp religiously the religious significance of the order of nature in a religious universe other than our own?

Crossing Religious Frontiers

The question of crossing religious frontiers without loss of orientation and with full awareness of the reality of the sacred, which cannot be reduced to any other category, is perhaps the most daunting of all religious and theological tasks today and the only really new challenge of significance in the world of religious discourse of contemporary man.[7] The modern mind, affected by the relativizing influence of secularism and rationalism, has only too often been presented with the plurality of religions as proof of their relativity. Until recently, few in the West had sought to develop a metaphysics and theology of comparative religion that would avoid the trap of either retreating into a provincialism that would accept only one's own religion as being true and believe all other religions to be simply historic and social systems devoid of any absolute truth and therefore ultimately false or irrelevant from the point of view of that Truth, which is none other than the Absolute Itself, or considering all religions to be false.

The various possibilities followed in the West during the past century in the study of religion in a multireligious universe began with either the reduction of all religious realities to phenomena to be studied "scientifically" and historically in the perspective of *Religionwissenschaft* without regard for either the question of theological truth or faith, or phenomenologically with little interest in the historical setting as well as disregard for the question of faith or metaphysical truth. Outside the secularized universities where these approaches were cultivated and continue to be so to a large extent even today, the seminaries did not cease to treat other religions as simply those of "heathens" or "pagans" to be studied so as to be refuted or to better prepare missionaries for combating them. In the West only during the past generation have a number of Christian scholars and theologians, and also a number of Jewish scholars, sought to develop a means of studying other religions theologically and spiritually as committed Christians or Jews. Meanwhile, there have also been those who have accepted a sentimental unity of religions at the expense of overlooking their formal differences and belittling what they usually refer to in a derogatory manner as "theological dogmas."

Amidst this rather bewildering scene, one also finds the view of the propagators of the perennial philosophy, the *philosophia* or *sophia perennis,* expositors of tradition such as R. Guenon, A. K. Coomaraswamy, F. Schuon, T. Burckhardt, M. Lings, and M. Pallis, who have provided the metaphysical knowledge necessary for understanding the multiplicity of religions while doing full justice to the claim of absoluteness within each authentic religion and the irreducible sacred forms and doctrines they contain within themselves.[8] And yet their views have not been taken seriously in academic circles until quite recently[9] since their metaphysical teachings negate the very basis upon which modern rationalism and historicism rest and challenge the very legitimacy of the modern and what is now called by some the postmodern world. Still, it is only the universal doctrines of the perennial philosophy as interpreted traditionally that are able to provide the key for the penetration into diverse religious worlds or different "Earths" and

"Heavens" without destroying the sense of the sacred or the absoluteness of each authentic religion, which in its essence is religion as such.

The traditional interpretation of the *philosophia perennis* sees a single Divine Reality as the origin of all the millennial religions that have governed human life over the ages and have created the traditional civilizations with their sacred laws, social institutions, arts, and sciences. This Divine Reality is beyond all conceptualization and all that can be said of It, and is referred to by such sacred formulae as the *Lā ilāha illa 'Lāh* (There is no divinity but God) of Islam, *neti neti* (Not this, not that) of the Upanishads, the "Tao that can be named is not the Tao" of the Tao Te-Ching and also the "I am that I am" of the Bible if the meaning of this well-known dictum is understood on the highest level.

Other traditions, especially the primal ones, refer to It only through silence or indirect allusion, whereas certain esotericisms such as the Cabala refer to It by means of expositions of blinding clarity that only veil Its infinite darkness transcending the light of manifestation. Even Its Name remains veiled and unutterable in certain traditions such as Judaism, but Its Reality is the origin of all that is sacred and the source of the teachings of each authentic faith. Like a mighty spring gushing forth atop a mountain, It gives rise to cascades of water that descend with ever-greater dispersion from each side, each cascade symbolizing all the grades of reality and the levels of cosmic and, by transposition, metacosmic reality of a particular religious universe. Yet all the cascades issue from a single Spring and the substance of all is ultimately nothing but that water which flows from the Spring at the mountaintop, the Reality which is the alpha of all sacred worlds and also the omega to which all that is within their embrace returns.

This Ultimate Reality, the Name that cannot be named, is the Beyond-Being of which Being is the first auto-determination. Together they comprise the Divine Order and are the principle of cosmic manifestation, the instrument of this manifestation being the Logos, the Word, the *Fiat Lux,* which one might say is the isthmus between the Divine and the cosmic orders, there being both an unmanifested and a manifested Logos. The Divine Order may be thus said to be comprised of the Divinity Itself, at once unconditioned and conditioned, supraontological and ontological, *Gottheit* or Godhead and the personal God, Allah in His Essence as well as Names and Qualities, the *nirguna* and *saguna* Brahman, "the nameless," which was the beginning of Heaven and Earth and the "named," which is the mother of the myriad creatures.[10] But also in a certain sense the Logos *in divinis* may be said to belong to the Divine Order, and this truth is of the greatest significance for the understanding of the religious assertion that the root of the natural order resides in the Divine Order.

From this Divine Order issue forth the many cascades alluded to above, each with different forms and trajectories and with no two cascades being formally the same, although all consisting of water. There are those that gush forth over similar types of formations and terrains corresponding to similar human collectivities, and thus constitute members of a religious family, while others display greater diversity and are produced by yet other types of terrains. There are never exact repetitions but there are always correspondences. Nor is it impossible for a tributary of one cascade to flow into another, but all cascades originate from the Spring on the mountaintop and none from each other. Their similarities are basically due to the oneness of their Origin and resemblances in the rock beds, which receive the water through that original act of gushing forth into each cascade that is theologically called "revelation." Only at the Spring Itself are all the cascades one and nowhere else should complete unity be sought among them. To repeat the well-known Islamic saying, "Unity is unique" *(al- tawḥīdu wāḥid);* one might add that only in that Supreme Unity, which is unique, must ultimate unity be sought. That is why Frithjof Schuon, the foremost contemporary expositor of the *philosophia perennis* especially as it concerns religion, has referred to this unity as "the transcendent unity of religions,"[11] thereby emphasizing that, although there is such a transcendent unity, religions do not necessarily assert the same truths on the level of their external forms and dogmas; on the contrary, they have a distinct character of their own, each religious universe being a unique creation of the Divine Artisan.

By virtue of this metaphysical view of reality, which sees the origin of all authentic religions in the Divine Principle-which manifests Itself through what the Abrahamic religions call revelations according to laws and an order belonging to the Divine Realm Itself-the traditional interpretation of the perennial philosophy[12] stands opposed to other current interpretations of religious diversity in basic ways. It opposes historicism by emphasizing the Divine Origin of each tradition and the spiritual genius of each religion, which is original in the deepest sense in that it issues directly from the Origin. It does not deny historical borrowings whether they be of Christian images in Sufi poetry or Sufi symbolism in St. John of the Cross or Taoist influences in Chan Buddhism, but it considers such borrowings as secondary in comparison with the living body of an authentic religion that must of necessity originate from Heaven. In emphasizing the reality of revelation and taking seriously a view of reality in which revelation is both possible and necessary, it certainly does not try to explain away major elements of a religion by simple recourse to historical borrowing as we see in the treatment of Islamic esoterism in the form of Sufism by so many Western orientalists from the middle of the nineteenth century to our own day.

Perennial philosophy, as traditionally understood, also opposes the phenomenological approach to the study of religion as usually practiced in academic circles by emphasizing the significance of faith, the question of religious truth, major and minor manifestations of the Spirit, and the ineluctable relation between phenomena and noumena, the former being a gateway to the latter despite the disclaimers of Immanuel Kant and most of post-Kantian Western philosophy. There are of course those Western scholars of religion such as H. Corbin, A. M. Schimmel, E. Benz, and others whose interpretation of phenomenology is close to the traditional understanding of the relation between the phenomenon and the noumenon of which precisely the phenomenon is the phenomenon, but such scholars constitute the exception rather than the rule.[13] As for M. Eliade, the foremost expositor of the phenomenological method in recent decades in America, it must be remembered that early in his life he drank deeply from the teachings of Guenon and Coomaraswamy and, despite moving away from the traditional position in his later life, retained certain important elements of the traditional worldview in his erudite and all-encompassing studies of various religions, although he no longer associated himself with that perspective.

The traditionalists, of course, also oppose the thesis based on the sentimental embracing of all religions within a unity that some envisage as a least common denominator among religions and which they hope to achieve at the expense of casting aside sacred doctrines and forms of a particular religion that do not seem to accord on the formal plane with those of another religion. Much of present-day ecumenism in the West is in fact based upon such a view and is thereby opposed by the proponents of perennial philosophy as being damaging to the very forms of that reality with which there is the need to create accord. They insist that authentic ecumenism can only be esoteric and cannot be achieved on the formal plane if one absolutizes the formal and relative plane with disregard for the basic metaphysical truth that only the Absolute is absolute.[14] Schuon has said quite aptly apropos of this question that harmony among religions is possible only in the divine stratosphere and not in the human atmosphere.

Needless to say, proponents of traditional metaphysics and the perennial philosophy also oppose both the relativists— who consider all religions to be relative, products of particular human societies without a Divine Origin that bestows an absoluteness upon each religious universe– and those who would consider their own religion to be the only true one and all other religions to be false. At least the latter view has the virtue of incorporating a lesser truth, but nevertheless a truth that has efficacy for those still living within a homogeneous religious world; but with the loss of such homogeneity it too falls into the danger of being rejected and repudiated. There is many a soul who cannot retain faith in his or her own religion at the expense of considering the followers of all other religions as being damned and who is intelligent enough to detect in the sacred art, doctrines, and rites of other traditions the seal of the Divine.

The metaphysics that the perennial philosophy, as traditionally understood, expounds is based not only on the hierarchy of universal existence to which we have referred briefly, but also the distinction between the outward and the inward, external form and essence, form and meaning, or phenomenon and noumenon. Without the comprehension of these basic distinctions, one cannot understand the dialectic of the traditional writers nor in fact the message of the perennial philosophy throughout the ages, a message echoed in works of seers and sages of the East and the West over the millennia; hence the perennial nature and also the universality of the *philosophia perennis.*

The Outward and the Inward in the Cosmos and in Religion

Traditional metaphysics sees the universe not as a multitude of facts or opaque objects each possessing a completely independent reality of its own, but as myriads of symbols reflecting higher realities. Before the Divine Reality nothing in fact can be said to exist; but on the plane of manifestation, the light of the intellect, sacred in its own essence and also sanctified by revelation, penetrates into what appears as fact to reach its inner significance and meaning so that opacity 18 transformed into transparency. Phenomena thus become transparent to realities that transcend them and that they reflect on their own existential level. Phenomena become gateways to noumenal realities. The universe, both religious and cosmic, 18 realized as being constituted of symbols reflecting the archetypes or supernal realities that belong to the Divine, and not simply the psychological order.[15] The language of symbolism is foundational to religions and is referred to in many sacred texts such as the Qur'ān which explicitly states that all things glorify Him with praise,[16] meaning they symbolize the Divine Archetype in their very existential reality, and their very substance 18 ultimately nothing other than the coagulation of that Divine Substance the Sufis call the Breath of the Compassionate (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*)

> The doctrine of symbolism may also be concluded from other verses in which the Qur'ān affirms that every single thing on earth has been sent down in finite measure, sent down as a loan rather than a gift, for nothing herebelow can last, and everything must in the end revert to its Supreme Source. In other words, the Archetype is always the Heir who inherits back the symbol in which It manifested Itself.[17]

The world is thus a veil that at once hides and reveals the realities beyond, being at once the shutter that hides the light of the inner or noumenal world and the opening to that world thanks to its symbolic nature and the inner reality (*al-bāṭin*) in Arabic) of which every outward reality (*al-ẓāhir*) is the outward. In other words, there is nothing that is simply an external and brute fact or phenomenon because the very notion of externality implies inwardness. To use the language of Rumi, every form (*Sūrat*) possesses an inner meaning (*ma'nā*) and leads to that inner meaning provided the beholder possesses a vision that has itself been cured of the ailment of seeing only the outward dimension.[18]

This structure pertains not only to that macrocosmic revelation, which is the cosmos in all its levels, but is to be found also and above all in religion, which marks the direct eruption of the Logos into the human order. Religion has an outward aspect concerning everyone destined to accept its teachings, but it also possesses an inner dimension accessible to the few who are able to penetrate from the realm of outwardness to the inward, who are constituted in such a way as to seek at all costs that pearl of great price which was forbidden by Christ from casting before swine. Herein lies the basic distinction between the exoteric and esoteric so much emphasized by the traditional proponents of the perennial philosophy and so much neglected in the modern West where even the official religious institutions marginalized the esoteric teachings of Christianity to such an extent in recent centuries that these teachings often ended up as some form of occultism, usually with dangerous consequences of both a religious and an intellectual nature.

The insistence upon the esoteric as the only means of penetrating beyond the veil of distinct formal worlds of various religions to the inner meaning or transcendent unity-binding them together, and wherein alone can religious harmony be found in the deepest sense-has in fact been one of the major impediments for a wider appreciation of the approach of the perennial philosophy to the study of religion in academic circles. The mainstream approaches to the study of religion in universities on both sides of the Atlantic have remained until quite recently opposed to the very category of esotericism, often confused with occultism, as have theological circles which have considered esotericism to be alien to the mainstream Christian perspectives. If during the past two decades the study of esotericism has gained some academic respect, especially in France and Germany,[19] it has been most of all thanks to the revival of tradition and the magisterial exposition of esotericism by the expositors of traditional doctrines.[20]

Esotericism, traditionally understood, does not negate the significance of the exoteric. On the contrary, it insists upon its importance, for it is only through forms that one can transcend the formal plane, and one cannot surely throw away what one does not possess. In direct contrast to pseudo-esotericism, which is so prevalent in such diverse forms in the West today, esotericism as traditionally understood not only comprehends the necessity of the exoteric but also insists upon the sacrosanct quality of religious forms even on the exoteric level and the fact that they are ordained by Heaven and cannot be rejected by those who have not even reached the state of accepting such forms. Esotericism emphasizes the basic distinction between transcending forms from above and rejecting forms by falling below them, thereby forfeiting the very possibility of ever reaching the world of the Formless. Much of the traditional study of religions is in fact precisely devoted to sacred forms and the meaning they convey as symbols and myths without denying their historical reality and significance.

The traditional interpretation of perennial philosophy, therefore, envisages a universe in which the outward is the gateway to the inward in both the domain of religion and the cosmos, the former being in fact the key for the understanding of the latter. There are symbols innate to the nature of things and there are those sanctified and given efficacy by a particular religion. There are rites, doctrines, sacred art, and practices on the formal plane in each religion that must be fully respected for what they are on their own formal level without any attempt of reducing them to some harmless historical borrowing or stigmatizing them by classifying them under pejorative categories such as animism, which for only too long was the favorite means used by an army of anthropologists and scholars of religion to draw a veil over the deeper significance of what they were studying. But the traditional study of religions sees beyond this vast and wondrous world of multiple sacred forms the one single Reality that is the origin of the cascades descending from the different sides of the mountain of existence. And it asserts that it is only authentic esotericism, or literally the inward dimension, that is able to grasp this inner Reality of diverse religious universes.

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Lest some think that this is simply a modern construct alien to the traditions themselves, let us recall the poem of the Persian philosopher Nāṣir-i Khusraw who a thousand years ago said,

Gaze upon the inner dimension of the world
with the eye of inwardness,
For with the outward eye,
thou shalt not see the inward.

Applying the doctrine of form and meaning alluded to above to the realm of religion, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī was to sing over seven centuries ago,

The difference among creatures issues from forms (*sūrat*),
When one reaches the world of meaning (*maʿnā*) *there is peace.*
O pith of existence, it is as a result of the
difference in perspective
That contention has come about between Muslims,
Zoroastrians, and Jews.

Inner Unity and Outer Multiplicity

The traditional doctrine of the inner unity and formal multiplicity of religions, far from being a modern invention like the other academic methods for the study of religions, is perennial and embedded in the traditions themselves. Only now it is formulated anew according to the dire needs of present-day humanity for religious understanding across the traditional frontiers that have separated one humanity from another over the centuries. Nor do the traditional expositors of the perennial philosophy have recourse to the language of only one tradition. Rather, they employ fully all the possibilities of the rich Western metaphysical tradition in addition to those of Islam, Hinduism, and other religions. Thus, they speak of essence and form, or substance and form, archetypes and theophanies, *Atman* and *maya,* manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) and veil *(ḥijāb),* etc. The principial realm is that of the essences, whereas the things of this world belong to the realm of forms. The Ultimate Reality is the Supreme Substance of which every other order of reality below is an accident. Archetypes contain the realities which through theophany are manifested in this world that per se is but a mirror reflecting forms of a celestial origin while being nothing in itself. Only *Atman,* the Supreme Self, is Real and all else is a veil that is unreal in the ultimate sense but possesses a reality on its own level, as *maya is* not simply illusion as usually understood but the creative power and *shakti,* or female consort, of *Atman.* The Divine manifests Itself through Its Names and Qualities, and yet things that manifest the Names are also veils or *Ḥijāb,* which hide the Face of the Beloved. For the Prophet has said, "Allah hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: Were He to withdraw their curtain, then would the splendors of His Aspect surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with his sight."[21]

To see beyond the veil of multiplicity-especially in the domain of religion-that unity which is the origin of all sacred forms and at the same time be able to grasp the significance of the *meaning* of sacred forms within the religious universe to which they belong are the tasks that traditional perennial philosophy has set before itself. It is a task which can be realized solely through recourse to that metaphysics that provides knowledge of the hierarchic structure of existence, the levels of reality, the reflection of the higher realities upon the lower planes, and the inward in the outward. They are tasks realized only through recourse to that hermeneutics which is aware of the esoteric dimension, of the objective realities that the phenomena veil and unveil beyond all the psychological, historical, and linguistic entanglements that have imprisoned the very notion of hermeneutics in recent years. It is also a task whose goal is the discovery of the truth that shines forth within each authentic religious universe manifesting the Absolute within its own boundaries without which it would in fact not be an authentic religion at all.

This question of the sense of the Absolute in each religion is of central importance especially in the present work, which seeks to study the relation between religion and the order of nature across religious frontiers.[22] Were there not to be the sense of the Absolute in a religion, that religion would not be religion as usually understood nor would anyone follow it seriously. And yet the very multiplicity of religions implies relativity if one accords truth to the message of Religions other than one's own. One can in fact ask legitimately that if each religion claims to be absolute, how can one have a multiplicity of absolutes, an assertion that is metaphysically absurd, multiplicity implying be definition reactivity. The Absolute must of necessity be One and, in fact, *the* One as asserted by so many metaphysicians over the ages.[23]

The answer to this dilemma is to be found in the distinction between the Absolute in Itself and what F. Schuon has referred to in many of his writings as "the relatively absolute." This term appears as being logically problematic. And yet it points to a most profound reality that allows one to understand why each religion is absolute and yet the Absolute in its ultimate sense is beyond any of the forms in which It manifests Itself in a particular religious universe. In each religious universe, the link connecting it to the Divine Order, whether it be called prophet, *avatara,* incarnation, or some other divine entity, is absolute within the religious universe in which it is a centre and yet it is not the Absolute as such. It might be said that each manifestation of the Divine Logos, to use the language of the Abrahamic religions, is for the world for which it is the centre, *the* Logos as such.[24] It is the sun in that planetary system which comprises its religious universe. And yet each sun is in reality a star in a vast firmament in which there are also other stars, which, while being stars in the firmament, do not cease to be suns in their own planetary system.

Furthermore, by virtue of the presence of this "relatively absolute" reality in a particular religious universe, other elements in that universe partake of the character of absoluteness, from sacred laws, to rites, to the efficacy of sacralized symbols and myths, to the significance of cosmos and to the order of nature. The fact that these elements within a particular religious universe might differ from or even contradict elements belonging to another universe does not prove their falsity or destroy their absoluteness within the universe to which they belong. The art of being able to cross religious frontiers in a religious and not simply anthropological, linguistic, or historical manner consists precisely of being able to appreciate the meaning of sacred doctrines, rites, forms, and symbols in the new landscape over which one is travelling with the sense of absoluteness that they possess and yet remain aware of *the* Absolute beyond all formal universes.

This art, which is also a science of the highest order, necessitates gazing upon forms in the sense of *sūrat* according to Rūmī, and not to be confused with the form in its Platonic or archetypal sense, always in function of the essence or meaning *(ma'nā)* and seeing the world of *ma'nā* reflected through the variegated forms comprising different worlds of the sacred. What must be done is to see the *religio perennis* as embedded in the inward dimension of the revealed religious universes, each of which is distinct and most precious in all its sacred details, as long as it has been preserved intact and has not undergone decay or deviation, and yet through its distinctness leads to that Universal Reality which is beyond all forms.

The Manifestations of the Absolute

The Absolute does not, however, manifest Itself in the same manner in different religious universes. The Ultimate Reality manifests Itself in multifarious sacred worlds sometimes in mythical forms and at other times as "abstract" monotheism. Sometimes It manifests Its Names and Qualities in the sounds and forms of a sacred language and at other times as divinities symbolizing the various divine forces; hence the distinction between a polytheism aware of the Divine Unity transcending multiple sacred forms[25] and idolatry decried so strongly by Judaism and Islam. In an atmosphere as anti-idolatrous as that of Islam the fourteenth century angelic poet Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī could say,

> *Were a Muslim to know what is an "idol,"*
> *He would know that religion is idol worship,*[26]

thus evoking the long Sufi tradition of identifying the but or idol not with a divinity considered as an independent reality of its own as was done by the pre-Islamic Arabs, but as the locus of the manifestation of Divine Presence *(ḥuḍūr).* As asserted by so many Sufis, followers of divinely revealed religions-whether speaking of the fire-temple, the Three Persons of the Trinity, or the many faces of Brahman-are singing the praise of the One even if it be in the guise of the many.

The difference in the manner of manifestation of the Absolute is also to be seen in the different positions that the "relatively absolute" holds within each sacred universe. In Christianity, Christ remains the central reality as do the Torah and the Qur'ān in Judaism and Islam, respectively, without the Hebrew prophets and the Prophet of Islam ceasing to be of the utmost significance. In Zoroastrianism the archangelic and angelic worlds play a central role cosmologically, ritually, and soteriologically different from their role in the Abrahamic world, without angels ceasing to be of great significance in the religious economy of the sacred universes of the monotheistic religions.

The Buddha image plays a salvific role in Buddhism different from the role of the icon in Christianity, and both religions differ in this matter from the aniconic worlds of Judaism and Islam. The cardinal directions have a central role in Native American cosmology and ritual not to be found in Christianity. One could go on indefinitely citing other examples to demonstrate how "the relatively absolute" is "situated" differently within each sacred universe, not to speak of the vertical levels of the manifestation of the Absolute from the Supreme Essence or Ultimate Reality, which is the Principle Itself, to Pure Being, the Logos, the archangelic, and angelic hierarchies. This universal hierarchy can in fact be understood fully only from the purely metaphysical and esoteric points of view[27] while it is symbolized in the religious language meant for a whole collectivity usually by the "heavens" to which the Qur'ān refers so often almost as a refrain[28] and which concerns the vertical hierarchy within a single religious universe. This vertical multiplicity of heavens must, moreover, be distinguished from Heaven referred to at the beginning of this chapter as symbolizing the transcendent pole of each of the religious worlds existing "horizontally" and side by side with each other on neighbouring "Earths."

*** From Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Religion and the Encounter of Nature.***

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Throughout this article, as in our other writings, we use the term "tradition" as encompassing principles and truths of a sacred origin along with their unfolding, application, and manifestation within a particular civilization, which by virtue of its link to these principles is called a traditional civilization. See S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), Chapter 2, "What Is Tradition?," pp. 65-92.

[2] We do not wish to denigrate in any way the significance of studies of a theological, philosophical, scientific or, needless to say, metaphysical nature dealing with the question of the order of nature in the context of one particular religion such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, of non-Abrahamic religions whether they be Hinduism and Buddhism, or one of the primal or "indigenous" religions such as those of the Native American. Such studies are both necessary and of great value even for people belonging to another tradition. What we wish to emphasize is that it is also necessary to turn to more than one tradition to bring out an understanding of the rapport between religion and the order of

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nature on a global scale at a time when the threat to the natural order is also global.

As pointed out in the Introduction to this work, our aim here is not only academic, although we have tried to conform to strict academic and scholarly standards. It is also practical in the sense of trying to provide one key among others to understand better the deeper dimensions of the current environmental crisis and hence to seek a solution on a level where alone we believe solutions can be found. See in this context S. H. Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Harper Collins, 1989).

[3] For the moment we shall use "nature" in the ordinary sense of the term. In the later chapters, however, we shall discuss in a philosophical manner what we mean exactly by nature in this study. Likewise, the term "order" will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

4 For example, R. Otto, J. Wach, G. van der Leeuw, M. Eliade, W. C. Smith, N. Smart, J. Hick, G. Parrinder, and H. Smith just to name a few among academic figures, not to forget the traditionalists to whom we shall turn shortly.

[5] We have dealt in a more general manner with the question of the study of religion in a multireligious universe in *Knowledge and the Sacred,* Chapter 9, "Principal Knowledge and the Multiplicity of Sacred Forms," pp. 280-308; and also in *Religion and Religions: The Challenge of Living in the Multireligious World,* The Loy H. Witherspoon Lectures in Religious Studies (Charlotte: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985). See also S. H. Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), Part 2, pp. 443ff.

[6] The terms "Heaven" and "Earth" possess at once a metaphysical, cosmological, and theological symbolism that no amount of the secularization of the cosmos and the reducing of "Heaven" to an incandescent mass of gases or the Earth to various types of rocks and geological formations can destroy. And it is, needless to say, in their eminently symbolic meaning that we use the terms Heaven and Earth as well as other traditional metaphysical and cosmological concepts throughout this book.

[7] See M. Pallis, "On Crossing Religious Frontiers," in his book *The Way and the Mountain* (London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1991), pp. 62-78; and

Lord Northbourne, *Religion in the Modern World* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1963), especially Chapter 1, "Religion," pp. 1-12.

[8] We have dealt with these authors in *Knowledge and the Sacred, pp.* l00ff. As for their works dealing specifically with religion see Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science,* p. 67.

[9] The work of F. Whaling (ed.), *The World's Religious Traditions: Current Perspectives in Religious Studies* (New York: Crossroad Publications, 1984), is perhaps the first academic work to take this perspective into consideration along with other academically better known ways of studying religions in their multiplicity. See also H. M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth: Philosophical Reflections and Perspectives,* trans. J. W. Rehal (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1989). See also Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science,* Chapter 5, "The *Philosophia Perennis* and the Study of Religion," p. 53ff.

[10] See the first lines of the first chapter of the Tao Te-thing to which we shall turn in the next chapter. Some of the primal religions refer to these levels of Divinity, respectively, as Grandfather and Father. On the levels of the Divine Order in various religions see also James B. Robinson, "Levels of Godhood in the World's Religions" (in press).

[11] See Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions,* trans. P. Townsend (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1993).

[12] We keep emphasizing the traditional interpretation of perennial philosophy because there are now those who claim to accept the perennial philosophy but who espouse such theories as evolution, which is totally alien to the traditional point of view according to which cosmic forms, life and humanity in particular, have descended from the Divine Order and not ascended from matter. See Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred,* Chapter 7, "Eternity and the Temporal Order," pp. 221-252.

[13] Corbin, with whom we were closely associated for two decades, used to translate phenomenology in a seminar we used to teach together at Tehran University to the Persian speaking students as *Kashf al-maḥjūb,* literally "rending asunder of the veil to reveal the hidden essence," and considered his method of the study of religious texts and also rites to be spiritual hermeneutics *(al-ta'wīl)* as understood in classical Sufi and Shi'ite thought. See D. Shayegan, *Henry Corbin: La Topographie spirituelle de l'Islam iranien* (Paris: Editions de la Difference, 19g0).

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[14] See Frithjof Schuon, *Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenism,* trans. G. Polit (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom Books, 1985).

[15] This distinction needs to be made because of the psychological interpretation of archetypes that has become "popular" ever since the advent of Jungian psychology.

[16] For example, the Qur'ān asserts, "The seven Heavens and the earth and all that is therein glorify Him, nor is there anything but glorifieth Him with praise; yet ye understand not their glorification" (XVIL 44, trans. M. Lings).

[17] M. Lings, *Symbol and Archetype: A Study of the Meaning of Existence* (Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, I991), pp. 1-2. On the traditional understanding of symbols see R. Guenon, *The Fundamental Symbols of Sacred Science,* trans. A. Moore (Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1995). As for the centrality of symbolism in religious language, see Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols,* trans. Ph. Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

[18] See S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (London: Golgonooza Press, 1987), pp. 89-90, 129-130.

[19] The works of Gilbert Durant and Antoine Faivre are particularly significant in this respect. See Faivre, *Acces d l'esoterisme occidentale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986); and Durant, *Science de Phomme et tradition* (Paris: Berg International, 1979). See also Jean-Paul Corsetti, *Histoire de l'esoterisme et des sciences occultes* (Paris: Larousse, 1992).
It is of some significance that a whole volume of *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest, Vol.* 21, is entitled *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad Publications, 1993), (eds. A. Faivre and Jacob Needleman). The content of these works, especially those of Faivre and Corsetti, also reveals the rather loose and wide definition given to esotericism in such studies, a definition that differs in certain fundamental ways from the meaning of esotericism as understood by traditionalists, although there is a notable common ground between them.

[20] The most important contemporary traditional work on this subject is F. Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way,* trans. W. Stoddart (Pates Manor, U.K.: Perennial Books, 19g0); see also L. Benoist, *L'Esoterisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963).

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[21] This famous metaphysical and cosmological work is in fact a commentary upon the Light Verse *(āyat al-nūr)* of the Qur'ān and this *ḥadīth.* For a translation of this work from the original Arabic and also from the traditional point of view, see Ghazali, *Le Tabernacle des Lumieres Michkat Al-Anwar,* trans. R. Deladriere (Paris: Seuil, 1981); see also W. H. T. Gairdner, *Al-Ghazzali's Mishkat al-Anwar* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1952), pp. 76-77

[22] See F. Schuon, "The Sense of the Absolute in Religions," in his *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom, trans. G. E. H. Palmer* (Pates Manor, U.K.: Perennial Books, 1978), pp. 11-28.

[23] This is especially true of Muslim sages such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, who in numerous works has "proven" the oneness of God from His absoluteness and His absoluteness from His oneness.

[24] It is this doctrine that was expounded in earlier days by ibn-'Arabī in his *Fusus al-hikam.* On his "logos doctrine" see his *La Sagesse des prophetes,* trans. with commentary by T. Burckhardt (Paris; Albin Michel, 1955, trans. by A. Culme-Seymour as *The Wisdom of the Prophets,* Gloucestershire: Beshara Publications, 1975); see also W. Chittick, "A Sufi Approach to Religious Diversity, ibn al-'Arabī on the Metaphysics of Revelation," in S. H. Nasr and W. Stoddart (eds.), *Religion of the Heart: Essays Presented to Frithjof Sch on His Eightieth Birthday* (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Traditional Studies, I991), PP. 50--90.

[25] On polytheism as not the negation of but polymorphous manifestation of the Divine Reality in the Hindu context, see A. Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), Bollingen Series LXXIII.

[26] From the *Gulshan-i rāz,* ed. Javad Nurbaksh (Tehran: Khanigah-i Nimatullahi, I976), P. 56.

[27] See Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred,* Chapter 5, *"Scientia Sacra," pp.* 130ff.

[28] We are referring to *al-samāwāt wa'l-arḍ,* literally "heavens and earth," which is repeated throughout the Sacred Text. It is of great significance for the explanation given above that *arḍ* or Earth is in the singular, symbolizing the last level of cosmic manifestation, and the heavens in the plural, referring to the many levels of reality separating the "Earth" from the Divine Realm.

ISLAM AND THE ENCOUNTER OF RELIGIONS

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

انا انزلنا التوراة فى هدى و نور يحكم بها النّبيّون الذين اسلموا للّذين هادوا و الربّانيون والاحبار بما
استحفظوا من كتاب الله وكانوا عليه شهداء فلا تخشوا النّاس و اخشون ولا تشتروا باياتى ثمنا قليلا و من
لم يحكم بما انزل الله فاولئك هم الكافرون۔

> Lo! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the Prophets who surrendered (unto Allah) judged the Jews, and the rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah's Scriptures as they were bidden to observe, and thereunto were they witnesses. So fear not mankind, but fear me. And barter not my revelations for a little gain. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers.
>
> (Qur'ān , V, 44)

اختلاف خلق از نام اوفتاد   چون به معنی رفت آرام اوفتاد

از نظر گاه است ای مغز وجود   اختلاف مؤمن و گبر و یهود

The difference among creatures comes from the outward form (*nām*);
When one penetrates into the inner meaning (*ma'nā*) there is

peace.
Oh marrow of existence! It is because of the point of view in question
That there has come into being differences among the Muslim, Zoroastrian and Jew.

(Rūmī)

I

Because it is concerned with the inner meaning (maʿnā) through the penetration of the outward form (*nām*), Sufism is by nature qualified to delve into the mysterious unity that underlies the diversity of religious forms. It is, moreover, the only aspect of Islam that can do full justice to the more profound questions of comparative religion, questions which cannot be ignored without violating the nature of religion itself. Moreover, the spread of modern influences into the Islamic world has made a serious study of comparative religion into an imperative need; the way to meet this need is to make use of all the keys stored in the treasury of Sufi wisdom wherewith to open doors which would otherwise remain locked and thus help to solve many intellectual problems by drawing on the metaphysical insight provided by the esoteric teachings of Islam as contained in Sufism.

In considering the problem of comparative religion from the Islamic point of view, it must be remembered at the outset that the metaphysical and theological significance of the presence of other religions differs depending on whether one is considering homogeneous traditional civilizations or the modern world, in which a homogeneous world view is no longer to be found. For traditional man, Muslim or otherwise, that is, a man whose life and thought are molded by a set of principles of transcendent origin and who lives in a society in which these principles are manifested in every sphere, other religious traditions appear as alien worlds which do not concern him as an immediate spiritual reality save in exceptional cases which only go to prove the rule. Before modern times the founder of each religion appeared as the sun in the solar system in which his followers were born, lived and died. The founders of other religions were either not known just as when the sun shines one can no longer observe the stars, which are nevertheless suns in their own right–or in certain cases such as that of Islam itself they were relegated to the rank of stars in the firmament, which do not have the same significance as the sun although they too are suns at the centre of their own solar systems.

Just as man is mentally and psychologically constituted in such a way as to live in a physical world with only one sun, even if modern astronomy assures him of the presence of others, so he is constituted religiously and spiritually to live under the light of the particular sun who is the founder of the religion to which he belongs. In normal times a man's religion *is the* religion, and in fact each religion addresses itself to a humanity which, for it, is humanity as such. The exclusiveness of a religion is a symbol of its divine origin, of the fact that it comes from the Absolute, of its being in itself a total way of life. Under normal circumstances there would be no need to take cognizance of the metaphysical significance of other traditions, just as normally man needs only to know of the sun of his own solar system in order to live a normal life on earth. Even if modern astronomy teaches him that there are myriads of other suns in the Universe, he relegates this knowledge to the background of his mind and continues to live as if his sun were the only one. The immediate experience of the physical world in which he lives presents to him a picture that has something absolute in its nature because of its symbolic content. Man was created to live in precisely such a world where there is only one sun in the sky so that the normal appearance of a single sun in the firmament corresponds to the natural structure of man's mind and psyche, and alone constitutes a natural and meaningful environment for him.

Likewise, in the religious sphere, man has been created to live in a homogeneous religious tradition, one in which the values of his religion are for him *the* values, absolute and binding. As long as the traditional divisions of humanity continued to subsist it was unnecessary, or, one might even say redundant, to seek to penetrate into the meaning of other traditions except in the particular circumstances when two religious traditions came in direct contact with one other. But even here the significance of this encounter was not the same as it is today when the homogeneity of the traditional climate itself is broken in the West and to a greater or lesser extent in other parts of the world where the modernist outlook has taken root. For centuries Christian and Jewish minorities have lived within the Islamic world and there has been even occasional religious contact between the respective communities; but each community has lived in its own traditional world. The necessity for the study of one tradition by another in such a case has not been at all the same as that faced by a modern educated person who, having been touched by the effect of modern thought, is forced to consider the problems of other religions on a different basis, a basis which concerns the nature of religion itself.

It might then be said that the necessity for studying other religious traditions is brought about by the particular conditions of the modern world, where the bounds of both the astronomical and religious universe have been broken. The dilemma of wishing to be able to remain faithful to one's own religion and yet come to accept the validity of other traditions is one of the results of the abnormal conditions that modern man faces and is a consequence of the anomalous conditions in which he lives. Yet it is a problem that he must face on pain of losing faith in religion itself. For a traditional Muslim living in Fez or Mashhad it is not necessary to be concerned with the verities of Buddhism or Christianity. Nor is it urgent for a peasant in the hills of Italy or Spain to learn about Hinduism. But for a person for whom the homogeneity of a religious culture has been ruptured by modern secularist philosophies or, alternatively, affected by contact with the authentic spirituality of foreign traditions, it is no longer possible to ignore the metaphysical and theological implications of the presence of other religions. If he does so, he falls into the danger of either losing his own religion or having a conception of the Divinity which, to say the least, places a limit upon the Divine Mercy.

The very plurality of religious forms has been used by some as an argument against the validity of all religions. The insistence upon this view stated in so many different forms today, itself proves the urgency of the study of other religions today for the sake of preserving religion itself. Moreover, this task is placed upon the shoulders of either those who have come into contact with the modern mentality and yet remain spiritually inclined, or else of those who thanks to exceptional circumstances are enabled to carry out this task. Traditional authorities are completely within their rights to address a traditional audience without the need of referring to other religious forms. But there are also those whose vocation it is to provide the keys with which the treasury of wisdom of other traditions can be unlocked, revealing to those who are destined to receive this wisdom the essential unity and universality and at the same time the formal diversity of tradition and revelation.[1] The most powerful defense for religion in the face of modern skepticism is precisely the universality of religion, the realization of the basic truth that God has addressed man many times, in each case saying 'I' and speaking in a language that is suit-able for the particular humanity to which the revelation is addressed.[2]

The difficulty of studying the relation between religions seriously arises, of course, only when one is concerned with the truth of religion itself. For the skeptic or the 'scientific' observer or the syncretistic the problem never transcends that of historical events and phenomena or of sentimental attitudes; it is not with such an approach that we are concerned here. The essential problem that the study of religion poses is how to preserve religious truth, traditional orthodoxy, the dogmatic theological structures of one's own religion and yet gain knowledge of other traditions and accept them as spiritually valid ways and roads to God. For one who is colour-blind it matters little what colours make up the rainbow. And it is precisely here that the very forces that have made the study of other religions religiously and metaphysically necessary have also made such a study difficult.

Modernism has either destroyed religious faith or else has narrowed it. Men of old were not only less skeptical than modern man but also less narrow in their faith. Today everyone congratulates himself on having an open mind; one can agree that it is good to have the windows of the mind open provided the mind also has walls. If a room has no walls it does not matter very much whether the windows are open or closed. Once man rejects revelation and tradition there is little virtue in religious open-mindedness because there is no longer a criterion for distinguishing the true from the false. Faith has narrowed in the case of many Christians as well as Muslims, Hindus, and others; here one is speaking, not about those who have fallen outside of the tradition, and therefore have no faith either narrow or broad, but about those who remain within it, but whose religious faith has become narrowly constricted as a result of the onslaught of modernism. Just to cite the case of Islam, modernism has not only caused some men to have their faith weakened but it has also produced certain movements against the most universal aspect of Islam, namely Sufism. Often a simple peasant has a more universal conception of Islam than a university-educated rationalist.

Another difficulty that modernism places in the way of a serious study of other religions is its own negation of the very metaphysical principles that underlie all religions. The 'science' of comparative religion or *Religionswissenschaft* began during the age of rationalism and came into its own as a separate discipline during the nineteenth century. The history of this discipline carries with it the limitations and prejudices of the period of its formation.[3] The 'age of enlightenment' saw itself as the final perfection of civilization and studied other religions as a prelude to Christianity with which it somehow identified itself despite its own rebellion against the Christian tradition. This attitude has continued to subsist to a certain degree. That is why to this day Islam receives the least satisfactory treatment at the hands of those interested in comparative religion. Coming after Christianity, it simply does not fit into the preconceived pattern that other religions were simple and childish imitations of something that reached its perfection with Christianity through the process of evolution, which everything is supposed somehow to undergo.[4]

Likewise, the nineteenth century left its own mark upon this discipline by impregnating it with theories of linear historical progress and the like, as well as the theory mentioned above, these being the best guarantee of not understanding a religious tradition and its spiritual significance. Phenomenology, which has criticized the shortcomings of the historical method and emphasized the morphological study of all religious manifestations, has been in a sense an improvement, but even that has not been sufficient. What has been lacking is true metaphysics, which alone can reveal the transparency of forms and bring to light their inner meaning. The study of religions began in the West when, on the one hand, the true metaphysical aspect of the Christian tradition had become eclipsed and nearly forgotten and, on the other hand, secular philosophies had become dominant which were from the beginning opposed to the very idea of the Transcendent and the *scientia sacra* which lies hidden within every religion. The study of religions, therefore, has been coloured by the mentality of modern Western man and seen under categories which have been either borrowed from later developments of Christianity or from reactions against Christianity.[5] But in any case that metaphysical background which is indispensable for a study in depth of religion has generally been lacking.

It is not, therefore, without interest for the discipline of comparative religion itself to see how the problem of the encounter of religions is seen from the point of view of other traditions. Such knowledge provides one more vision of a reality which surrounds us, but it is a vision from another perspective than the familiar one, and therefore reveals another aspect of this encompassing reality. Whatever any orthodox religion has to say about the relation between religions is itself a precious insight into the real nature of religion as such and helps to explain the juxtaposition of religions in the spiritual space in which they are situated. It is with this end in view that the study of the problem of the encounter of religions from the Islamic point of view can be fruitful, since in this way it will also be possible to bring into focus the metaphysical and theological implications of the presence of other religious traditions for Islam itself.

The metaphysical background which was absent when the study of comparative religion began in the West has always been alive within the Islamic tradition as within other living Oriental traditions. According to it reality is comprised not of just the single psycho-physical level in which ordinary men live but of multiple states of being standing hierarchically one above the other. Each state of being possesses its own objective reality; the degree of its reality depending on how intense is the light of being which illuminates it. At the origin stands the source of all existence, the Absolute which is at once being and above-Being (the *dhāt* of Sufism). The basis of all metaphysical doctrine is the distinction between the Absolute and the relative. The task of all traditional cosmology is to elucidate the science of forms belonging to each state of being. In Islam all metaphysics is contained in the first *Shahādah, Lā ilāha ill ʾAllāh* (there is no divinity but the Divine), which means ultimately that only the Absolute is absolute, all else is relative; and all cosmology is contained in principle in the second *Shahādah, Muḥammadan rasul Allāh* (Muhammad is the messenger of God), which means that all that is positive in the Universe, of which Muhammad is the supreme symbol, comes from God.

If then the source of all things, all beings, all forms, is the Transcendent Reality, every being must have an external and an internal aspect, one which manifests it outwardly and another which connects it inwardly to the spiritual world. It is said in the Qur'ān that God is both the Outward (*al-ẓāhir*) *and* the Inward (*al-bāṭin*). One might also say, using the language of Sufism, that each thing in the Universe has an outward form (ṣūrah) and an inner essence (*ma'nā*). The form belongs to the world of multiplicity and the essence leads to Unity which is the Origin of all things. This is especially true of religion, that direct manifestation of the Divine in the human order. It too must have a form and an essence. And so religions can be studied either in their forms, which should then be described and compared, or in their essence, which leads to their inner unity because the source of all reality and therefore all religion is God who is One. But inasmuch as the essence comes before the form and links it with the higher orders of being it is precisely through the essence that the significance of the form can be understood. Only by gaining a vision of Unity can man come to realize the unity of all that exists. Only in understanding the essence of a religion can its forms become understood as intelligible symbols rather than opaque facts.

Islam's relation to other religions has been dictated by this meta-physical doctrine which underlies its whole intellectual edifice. It has studied both the forms of other religions and, in certain instances, their essence. And today it stands equipped with the necessary intellectual and spiritual means of carrying out this study in the new circumstances which the modern world has placed before it.

A characteristic of Islam which is particularly pertinent in regard to this question is the synthesizing and integrating power of the Islamic revelation, which allows the grace of the prophets and saints of previous religions–especially of the Abrahamic line– to reach the Muslim within the context provided by the grace of the Prophet of Islam. For a Christian all the grace of God is centered in the personality of Christ, without whom there would be no other channel of grace open to man. For the Muslim, within the firmament of Islam, in which the Prophet is like the full moon, other great prophets and saints are like stars which shine in the same firmament, but they do so by virtue of the grace of Muhammad—upon whom be peace. A Muslim can pray to Abraham or Christ, not as Jewish or Christian prophets, but as Muslim ones, and in fact often does so, as seen in the popular 'prayer of Abraham' in the Sunni world and the *Du'ā-yi wārith* in Shi'ite Islam. The synthesizing power of Islam has made possible the integration of previous spiritual poles within the world of Islam and the effective operation of their particular grace within that world. This feature of Islam, so important in the ritual life of Muslims, has also the greatest significance in the intellectual and spiritual aspects of the problem of comparative religion from the Islamic point of view.

II

At first sight it may seem strange that, despite the features described above, Islam is, of all the major religions of the world today, the one that has displayed the least amount of interest in the study of the history and doctrines of other religions although its own point of view about religion is the most universal possible. Very few works have been written in this field in Persian and even fewer in Arabic except for translations from European sources.[6] And in recently established programmes in the field of religion in America and England there are fewer Muslim students than those of any other major tradition.

The reason for this relative neglect of the discipline of comparative religion by Muslims is that Islam is not at all disturbed theologically by the presence of other religions. The existence of other traditions is taken for granted, and in fact Islam is based on the conception of the universality of revelation. The Qur'ān among all sacred scriptures is the one that speaks the most universal language,[7] and Muslims believe in the existence of a large number of prophets (traditionally given as 124,000) sent to every people.[8] The spiritual anthropology depicted in the Qur'ān makes of prophecy a necessary element of the human condition. Man is truly man only by virtue of his participation in a tradition. Adam, the first man, was also the first prophet. Man did not evolve from polytheism to monotheism. He began as a monotheist and has to be gradually reminded of the original message of unity (*al-tawḥīd*) which he is ever in danger of forgetting. Human history consists of cycles of prophecy, with each new prophecy beginning a new cycle of humanity.

Islam also considers itself to be the reassertion of the original religion, of the doctrine of Unity, which always was and always will be. That is why it is called the primordial religion *(al-dīn al-ḥanīf);* it comes at the end of this human cycle to reassert the essential truth of the primordial tradition.[9] It is thus like the *sanatana dharma* of Hinduism, and on the metaphysical plane has a profound affinity with this tradition, which some Sufis have in fact called the '*Sharī'ah* or religion of Adam'. Not only have some of the most authoritative Muslim scholars of the sub-continent during the Moghul period called the Hindus '*ahl al-kitāb*', belonging to the chain of prophets preceding Islam and beginning with Adam, but also some of the Muslim Indian commentators have considered the prophet Dhu 'l-Kifl mentioned in the Qur'ān to be the Buddha of Kifl (Kapilavasta) and the 'Fig Tree' of surah 95 to be the Bodi Tree under which the Buddha received his illumination. Muslims have always had an innate feeling of possessing in their purest form the doctrines that all religions have come to proclaim before. In Islamic gnosis, or Sufism, this truth is *al-tawḥīd* in its metaphysical sense, the eternal wisdom, the *religio perennis,* which Islam has come to reveal in its fullness. For the Shari'ite Muslim it is the doctrine of monotheism which he believes to have been revealed by every prophet. That is why at the end of the cycle the appearance of the Mahdī brings to light the common inner meaning of all religions.

These and other more contingent factors have made Muslims less interested in the study of other religions than is the case with Christians, Hindus and others. But nevertheless it is necessary today to remind the modern educated Muslims of the universality of their own tradition and of the historical contacts Islam has made with other religions, a fact that has been gradually forgotten in recent times in many circles. Moreover it is necessary to apply the universal principles contained within Islam to study other traditions in the light of the anomalous conditions that the modern world has brought about.[10]

To understand the encounter of Islam with other religions it must be remembered that Islam itself comprises an exoteric and an esoteric dimension, namely a Divine Law or *Sharīʿah and* a spiritual way or *Ṭarīqah.* Moreover Islam has cultivated different arts and sciences and intellectual perspectives. It has its own schools of theology, philosophy and theosophy (*ḥikmah*)–understood in its original sense before modern usage had debased the word. It has had its own historians and scholars, geographers and travelers. Through all of these channels Islam has encountered other religions, and the profundity of the encounter has depended each time on the perspective in question.

If we exclude the modern period with its rapid means of communication, it can be said with safety that Islam has had more contact with other traditions than any other of the world religions. It encountered Christianity and Judaism in its cradle and during its first expansion northward. It met the Iranian religions, both Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, in the Sassanid Empire. It gradually absorbed small communities in which remnants of late Hellenistic cults continued, especially the Sabaean community of Harran, which considered it-self the heir to the most esoteric aspect of the Greek tradition. It met Buddhism in north-west Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, and Hinduism in Sind and later in many parts of the Indian sub-continent. There was even contact with Mongolian and Siberian Shamanism on the popular level, mostly through the Turkish tribes who had followed Shamanism before their conversion to Islam. Moreover the Muslims of Sinkiang were in direct contact with the Chinese tradition.

In fact, of all the important religious traditions of Asia—putting aside Shintoism which was limited to Japan—there is none with which Muslims have had no early intellectual contact, save for the Chinese tradition with which contact on a religious and intellectual level by the main part of the Muslim world happened only after the Mongol invasion. As for the Chinese Muslim Community, it remained more or less separated from its coreligionists further west so that its knowledge of the Chinese tradition was not generally shared. Only an occasional traveler like Ibn Baṭṭūṭah provided the Muslim intelligentsia with knowledge of things Chinese. Yet, even with regard to the Chinese tradition the Muslims preserved a sense of respect. The prophetic *ḥadith* 'Seek knowledge, even in China' was known by all, and some Persian Sufis have made specific reference to the Divine origin of the Chinese tradition. Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār in his *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* (*Conference of the Birds*), speaking of the Simurgh who symbolizes the Divine Essence and his feather which symbolizes divine revelation, writes:

> 'An astonishing thing! The first manifestation of the Simurgh took place in China in the middle of the night. One of his feathers fell on China and his reputation filled the world. Everyone made a picture of this feather, and from it formed his own system of ideas, and so fell into a turmoil. This feather is still in the picture-gallery of that country; hence the saying, "Seek knowledge, even in China!"
>
> 'But for his manifestation there would not have been so much noise in the world concerning this mysterious Being. This sign of his existence is a token of his glory. All souls carry an impression of the image of his feather. Since the description

of it has neither head nor tail, beginning nor end, it is not necessary to say more about it.[11]

As for the encounter of Islam with the Judaeo-Christian tradition, this has persisted throughout nearly fourteen centuries of the history of Islam. Judaism and Christianity themselves are in a sense 'contained' in Islam inasmuch as the latter is the final affirmation of the Abrahamic tradition of which Judaism and Christianity are the two earlier manifestations. However there is no question of historical borrowing here as some orientalists have sought to show; the *Sharī'ah is a* Divine Law similar in many ways to Talmudic law, but not borrowed from it or based upon it; Christ plays a very important role in Islam, but this is not a distortion of the Christian conception of Christ. The latter is, independently of Christianity, a part of the Islamic religious view. Christ and Moses, as well as the other ancient Hebrew prophets, play a part in Islam independently of any possible historical borrowing from Judaism and Christianity. The similarities that exist come only from the common transcendent archetype of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Encounters with Judaism and Christianity during the early Islamic centuries were mostly polemical and concerned with theological questions; it can, in fact, be said that the problems faced by Philo and the early Church Fathers, versus the rational demonstration of articles of faith such as the immortality of the soul, resurrection of the body and creation *ex-nihilo,* influenced early Muslim theologians in adopting similar arguments for the defence of Islam against rationalistic criticism.[12] Usually most of the early Muslim works on the history of religion *(al-Milal wa 'l-niḥal)* contain chapters devoted to Judaism and Christianity, some of which like *al-Mughnī* of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār are precious documents for present-day knowledge of certain aspects of the Eastern Church and of the eastern Christian communities. The figures of Moses and Christ appear in nearly every Muslim religious work, especially those of the Sufis, such as the *Futuḥāt al-*

, *makkiyyah of* Ibn ʻArabī, the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī, *or* the *Gulshan-i rāz* of Shabistarī. Nearly every experience undergone by these prophets, such as the vision of the burning bush by Moses, or Christ's miracle of raising the dead to life, plays an important part in the exposition of Sufi doctrine.[13] Needless to say, all these sources rejected the ideas of divine filiation and incarnation in Christianity, neither of which ideas is in conformity with the Islamic perspective, and occasionally works were written with the express purpose of refuting these doctrines.[14]

It must not be thought that contact between the Muslim and the Christian and Jewish communities has been constant over the ages. During the first centuries of Islam, especially the early Abbasid period, debates between the different communities were common. After the Crusades the bitterness brought about by political events caused the Muslim and Christian communities in the Near East, where their physical contact is closest, to be completely isolated from one another. The same situation is now developing in regard to Judaism as a result of the situation in Palestine. Yet in other parts of the Muslim world where socio-political events did not bring about lasting friction, study of both Christianity and Judaism continued, often with much sympathy, and there have been occasional contacts of a theological and spiritual order between these various communities. Only a century ago the Persian Sufi poet Hātif Iṣfahānī praised Christianity as being an affirmation of Divine Unity provided its doctrine of trinity is understood in its metaphysical significance. In his memorable poem *(Tarjīʻ band)* he writes:

> In the church I said to a Christian charmer of hearts, 'O thou in whose net the heart are captive! O thou to the warp of whose girdle each hair-tip of mine are separately attached!
> How long wilt thou continue not to find the way to the Divine Unity? How long wilt thou impose on the One the shame of the Trinity?
> How can it be right to name the One True God "Father",

> "Son", and "Holy Ghost"?'
>
> She parted her sweet lips and said to me, while with sweet laughter she poured sugar from her lips: 'If thou art aware of the Secret of the Divine Unity, do not cast on us the stigma of infidelity! In three mirrors the Eternal Beauty cast a ray from His effulgent countenance.
>
> Silk does not become three things if thou callest it *Parniyān, Ḥarīr,* and *Parand.*'[15] While we were thus speaking, this chant rose up beside us from the church bell:
>
> 'He is One and there is naught save He:
> There is no God save Him alone!'[16]

During this century the great Algerian Sufi, Shaykh Aḥmad al-'Alawī, echoed this same view when he called for the joining of hands of all religions to combat modern unbelief and showed particular interest in Christianity, whose doctrines he knew well.[17] Altogether the contact between Islam and the Judaeo-Christian tradition over the centuries has been immense both on the formal and informal planes. This heritage provides all that is needed for a meaningful encounter between these religions today.

As for the Iranian religions, Islam encountered them also early in its career as it subdued the Sassanid Empire and penetrated into the Iranian plateau. During the three or four centuries when Islam gradually became completely dominant in Persia it had numerous contacts with these religions and especially with Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. It even influenced some of the later Zoroastrian writings produced in the early Islamic period in the same way that elements of Zoroastrianism were integrated into certain perspectives of Islamic intellectual life.[18] Debates carried on with followers of Iranian religions in Basra and Baghdad itself is recorded in early theological and historical sources. From the beginning the Zoroastrians were accepted as a 'People of the Book' while the Manichaeans were opposed on fundamental theological grounds. Nevertheless the influence of the latter, especially in regard to cosmogonical and cosmological ideas, is to be seen in certain Ismaili cosmologies and most likely also in some of the writings of Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī. Manichaean beliefs have also been described by many scholars such as Ibn al-Nadīm and Bīrūnī, and in fact Muslim works serve as a valuable source for present-day knowledge of certain aspects of Manichaeism.[19]

Zoroastrianism had more intimate contact with Islam than did Manichaeism. But here again the situation has not been the same in all Muslim lands. Zoroastrianism, although known on the popular level everywhere, was not as much studied in the Arab part of the Muslim world as in Persia which had been its ancient home.[20] In Persia Zoroastrianism provided first of all a vocabulary for Sufi poets like Ḥāfiẓ who often speak of the 'fire-temple', the Zoroastrian priest, etc., as symbols of the Sufi centre *(khāniqah* or *zāwiyah),* the spiritual master, and so on;[21] this manner of speaking, however, does not at all imply an historical influence of Zoroastrianism upon Sufism. Rather is it a means whereby the Sufi asserted the independence of esotericism from the exoteric forms of the revelation, in the sense that esotericism does not derive from exotericism but directly from God who is the source of the revelation containing both dimensions. Zoroastrian angelology and cosmology were also resuscitated by Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, the founder of the school of Illumination or *Ishrāq,* who made these symbols transparent in the light of Islamic gnosis.[22] In this domain there was also an influence of the *Ishrāqī* School itself upon certain schools of later Zoroastrianism such as the movement connected with the name of Ādhar Kaywān.

It is when we turn to the Indian religions—essentially Hinduism and Buddhism—that from the Islamic point of view the question of understanding and penetrating into religious forms becomes more difficult. This difficulty is brought about not only because of the mythological language of the Indian traditions which is different from the 'abstract' language of Islam, but also because in going from the one tradition to the others one moves from the background of the Abrahamic traditions to a different spiritual climate. Nevertheless Islam has had profound contact with the religions of India on both the formal and metaphysical planes. Already through the Indian sciences which had reached the Muslims both through Pahlavi and directly from Sanskrit, some knowledge had been gained of Indian culture during the early Islamic period. But it is thanks to the incomparable *Taḥqīq mā li ʾl-hind* or *India* of Bīrūnī, a work unique in the exactitude of its compilation, that medieval Muslims gained a knowledge of Hinduism, especially the Vishnavite school with which Bīrūnī seems to have been best acquainted.[23] He was also responsible for the translation of the *Patanjali Yoga* into Arabic, and in fact inaugurated a tradition of contact with Hinduism which, al-though interrupted by several gaps in time, continued through Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī, to Abu ʾl-Faḍl, Dārā Shukūh, and the vast movement of translation of Hindu works into Persian in the Moghul period.[24]

On the religious plane, although the Zoroastrians were definitely included among the *ahl al-kitāb* or 'people of the Book', there was a debate among the general Muslim public as to where Hinduism stood, although as already mentioned many of the *'ulamā'* of India definitely considered Hindus as 'people of the Book'. It goes without saying that in India itself the Muslims certainly did not treat the Hindus as simple pagans or idol-worshippers like those of Arabia but came to respect them as possessing a religion of their own. As already mentioned, many Sufis in India called Hinduism the religion of Adam, and such an orthodox Naqshbandī saint as Mirzā Maẓhar Jān Jānān considered the Vedas as divinely inspired. There was, in fact, in Islam a presentiment of the primordial character of Hinduism which moved many Muslim authors to identify Brahman with Abraham. This connection may seem strange linguistically but it contains a deep metaphysical significance. Abraham is, for Islam, the original patriarch identified with the primordial religion (*al-dīn al-ḥanīf*) which Islam came to reassert and reaffirm. The connection of the name of the *barāhimah* (namely Hindus) with Abraham was precisely an assertion of the primordial nature of the Hindu tradition in the Muslim mind.

The Sufi master ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī writes in his *al-Insān al-kāmil:*

> The people of the book are divided into many groups. As for the *barāhimah* [Hindus] they claim that they belong to the religion of Abraham and that they are of his progeny and possess special acts of worship. . . . The *barāhimah* worship God absolutely without [re-course to] prophet or messenger. In fact, they say there is nothing in the world of existence except that it be the created of God. They testify to His Oneness in Being, but deny the prophets and messengers completely. Their worship of the Truth is like that of the prophets before their prophetic mission. They claim to be the children of Abraham—upon whom be peace—and say that they possess a book written for them by Abraham—upon whom be peace—himself, except that they say that it came from His Lord. In it the truth of things is mentioned and it has five parts. As for the four parts they permit their reading to everyone. But as for the fifth part they do not allow its reading except to a few among them, because of its depth and unfathomableness. It is well known among them that whoever reads the fifth part of their book will of necessity come into the fold of Islam and enter into the religion of Muhammad—upon whom be peace.[25]

Al-Jīlī distinguishes between Hindu metaphysics and the daily practice of the Hindus and identifies especially their metaphysical doctrines with the doctrine of Divine Unity in Islam. His reference to the 'Fifth Veda' signifies precisely the inner identity of the esoteric and metaphysical doctrines of the two traditions. He, like the other Sufis, sought to approach Hinduism through a metaphysical penetration into its mythological structure to reveal the presence of the One behind the veil of the many. In this domain his approach was not basically different from the attitude of those Sufis who tried to interpret the Christian Trinity as an assertion rather than a negation of Divine Unity.

The translation of Hindu works into Persian during the Moghul period is an event of great spiritual significance whose full import has not as yet been explored, especially by non-Persian and non-Indian Muslims. The central figure in this movement was the prince Dārā Shukūh who was responsible for the translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* the *Yoga Vasishtha,* and, most important of all, the *Upanishads.* It was from his Persian version that the Latin translation of Anquetil-Duperron was made, a translation which influenced many of the nineteenth-century European philosophers like Schelling and a copy of which was owned by the mystic poet William Blake.[26]

Whatever the significance of this translation has been for the spread of Hindu studies in the West, it is even more significant for the question of the religious encounter between Hinduism and Islam today. In the same way that the Crusades nearly destroyed amicable contacts between Islam and Christianity in the Near East, the events of the past century have embittered the contact between Hinduism and Islam in the Indian sub-continent itself, and perhaps a land like Persia, where there has been both the historical contact with Hinduism and lack of bitter political encounters during recent times, could be a more suitable place for making a basic study of the relations between Hinduism and Islam on the highest level.

Be that as it may, the translations of Dārā Shukūh do not at all indicate a syncretism or eclecticism as one finds in certain other mixed movements in India. Dārā was a Sufi of the Qādiriyyah order and a devout Muslim. He believed the *Upanishads* to be the 'Hidden Books' to which the Qur'ān refers (lvi. 77–80) and wrote that: 'They contain the essence of unity and they are secrets which have to be kept hidden!'[27] His *Majma' al-baḥrayn is* an attempt to show the identity of the Muslim and Hindu doctrines of unity. It is enough to read

Dārā Shukūh's translation of any of the *Upanishads* to realize that he was not only translating words into Persian but also ideas into the framework of Sufism. His translations contain a Sufi view of the *Upanishads* and, far from being an attempt to syncretize, represent a serious effort to create a bridge between Hindu and Islamic meta-physics. His translations and numerous others of such Hindu classics as the *Rāmāyana,* the *Mahābhārata* and the *Yoga Vasishtha,* upon which the Persian sage Mīr Abu 'l-Qāsim Findiriskī wrote a commentary, are a veritable treasure which should become known to the Muslim world at large and not remain confined to the Persians and the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent.[28] These writings, as well as those of other Sufi masters in Muslim India such as Ghawth 'Alī Shah, the Sufi expositor of Tantrism, and many others, who have often given the most penetrating explanations of Hindu meta-physics and mythology, can serve as a basis for a serious study of the Hindu tradition in the light of modern conditions.

It is surprising that although Islam had so much contact with Buddhism there is much less about this tradition in Muslim sources than about Hinduism. Of course, through the translation of the *Pancha Tatra* into Arabic from Pahlavi as well as through other literary sources and oral traditions, something was known of the personality of the Buddha as a wise man, and he was often identified with the figure of Hermes as the origin of wisdom.[29] Many of the common sources of religious schools and sects considered Buddhism as a branch of Hinduism,[30] and even Bīrūnī in his *India* devoted little attention to it.

The most serious and noteworthy study of Buddhism in Islamic annals outside the works written more recently by Indian Muslims comes rather late, in the eighth/fourteenth century, in the universal history of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallah.[31] The chapter devoted to Buddhism, a religion which must have attracted new attention with the coming of the Mongols, is based mostly upon collections of traditions and the direct

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assistance of a Kashmiri lama named Kamalashri-Bakhshi. The chapter includes an account of Indian mythology drawn mostly from the *Puranas* and the best Muslim description of the Yuga cycles, but all seen from the Buddhist rather than the Hindu point of view. The most outstanding aspect of the work, however, is the account of the life of the Buddha,[32] which is unique in Islamic writings. He is considered a prophet with a book called *Abi dharma* containing the quintessence of truth. As is to be expected, the Muslims see all 'divine descents' or *Avatāras* as prophets in the Islamic sense, so that such a treatment of the Buddha should not be in any way surprising. This valuable account of the life of Shakyamuni became well known and was incorporated in several later Persian works on universal history. But there was no further work of any great significance in this field as there was in the case of Hinduism, mostly because the same opportunity of direct contact with Buddhism did not present itself later save in western China, where the Muslim community continued to live relatively isolated from the main stream of Islamic intellectual life.

III

This analysis of some of the features of the historical contact between Islam and other religions has revealed the fact that during its history Islam has felt the presence of other traditions on different levels, and in different modes, which may be enumerated as essentially: the *Shari ah;* theology; history; science, philosophy, and learning; and finally Sufism or esotericism. On each level the encounter with other religions has had a meaning and continues to do so and each en-counter can contribute to the total understanding of other traditions.

On the level of the *Sharīʿah Islam* has always seen other religions as a Divine Law like itself. Many medieval jurists referred to the *sharʿ* of other prophets and peoples, and Islamic Law itself gives freedom within the Islamic world *(dār al-Islām)* for other people having their own Divine Law to follow their own- ways within their community, wherein they enjoy complete religious independence. Many studies have been made of what one might call 'comparative religious law' in which the religious injunctions of different communities have been described and compared. The Muslim jurists were also the first to develop the science of international law, of trying to provide means whereby relations between peoples following differing codes of law could be established. This description and morphological study of the sacred laws of other religions is one that can in fact be pursued today on the basis established by the classical jurists.

Theological debates occurred early between Muslims and followers of other faiths, incited especially by the Muʿtazilites who were interested in this subject. Also discussions about different religions were held with some of the Shiʿite Imams and often by adherents of these religions themselves, as is recorded in Shiʿite sources such as Ibn Bābuyah. Likewise, Ismāʿīli authors continued to interest them-selves in other religions particularly because of their emphasis upon the cycles of prophecy and the universality of esotericism.[33] There grew from these theological debates the numerous works on 'sects' or *al-Milal wa 'l-niḥal,* to the extent that one can say that the Muslims were the founders of the science of comparative religion. Many outstanding theologians–Shiʿite s and Sunnis alike–wrote works of this kind like *Kitāb al-maqālāt wa 'l-firaq* of Saʿd ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ashʿarī al-Qumi, the *Kitāb firaq al-shīʿah* of al-Nawbakhtī, the *Farq bayn al-firaq* of al-Baghdādī, the *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn* of Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, the founder of Ashʿarite theology,[34] *al-Faṣl* of Ibn Ḥazm, *Iʿtiqādāt firaq al-muslimīn* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and the best-known work of this kind, *al-Milal wa 'l-niḥal* of al-Shahristānī. All of these authors were outstanding theologians and their approach is primarily theological and usually polemical. But inasmuch as again in modern times theological debates have come to take place, especially between Christianity, Judaism and Islam, these works can serve as a basis and provide a background for the task that lies ahead in this domain.

Then there is the tradition of historians who tried to describe simply in as objective a manner as possible what they saw or read of other religions and religious cultures. We see such an approach in the writings of universal historians like al-Masʿūdī and al-Yaʿqūbī. Al-Masʿūdī also wrote a special treatise on religions, entitled *al-Maqālāt fī uṣūl al-diyānāt.* There are the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm and the *Bayān al-adyān* of Abu ʾl-Maʿālī Muḥammad ibn ʿUbaydallāh, where a very fair account of religions is given, and there are references by both Bīrūnī: and Nāṣir-i Khusraw to Abu ʾl-ʿAbbās Irānshahrī, who is said to have studied the doctrines of other religions with genuine interest. There is the incomparable Bīrūnī himself who, not only in his *India* but also in the *Chronology of Ancient Nations* and many other works, has provided a wealth of information about so many different religions. This tradition continued in later universal histories up to very recent times in such works as the *Nāsikh al-tawārikh* which was compiled in Persia only about a century ago. But these later works were mostly repetitions of earlier ones when it came to religious matters. This tradition of objective accounts of other religions could again serve as a basis for contemporary works in Muslim languages on Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and even the religions of the American Indians, as well as on Christianity and Judaism; however many such works in Islamic languages have been compiled by non-Muslim authors for reasons other than that of creating understanding between religions. Such descriptive accounts should be based upon genuine sources; and especially as far as the Oriental traditions are concerned, they should not be an echo of the mistakes and prejudices of Western works translated into Arabic, Persian, Turkish, etc., as is in fact often the case.[35]

In the sphere of science and philosophy and learning in general the integration of elements from these fields into the Islamic world-view meant also contact with the religion of the civilizations from which the material in question came. It must be remembered that in a traditional civilization every science is connected in one way or another with the religious principles of that civilization. The Indian medicine and astronomy that the Muslims soon absorbed also brought them into contact with certain Hindu cosmological ideas. Indian and Persian works on natural history acquainted Muslims with the religious conception of nature present in these works. As for the Graeco-Hellenistic sciences, although the Muslims were not interested in the Olympic pantheon, through Greek philosophical and scientific works they came to learn of the Orphic-Pythagorean element of the Greek tradition, which interested them immensely, precisely because it was an assertion of the doctrine of Divine Unity. If they called Plato the *imam* of the philosophers and Plotinus 'the Shaykh of the Greeks' (namely, their Sufi master) it was again because in their writings they saw the expression of that metaphysical doctrine that Islam was to expound later. In the *Ishrāqī* theosophy of Suhrawardī, moreover, there is continuous reference to the universality of a wisdom which was shared by all nations of old and which found its universal expression in Islamic gnosis.[36] It is that wisdom which Steuben, Leibniz and the Neoscholastics were later to call the *philosophia perennis,* an expression to which A. K. Coomaraswamy quite rightly added the epithet *et universalis.*

It is, however, on the level of esotericism, in the perspective of Sufism, that the most profound encounter with other traditions has been made and where one can find the indispensable ground for the understanding in depth of other religions today. The Sufi is one who seeks to transcend the world of forms, to journey from multiplicity to Unity, from the particular to the Universal. He leaves the many for the One and through this very process is granted the vision of the One in the many. For him all forms become transparent, including religious forms, thus revealing to him their unique origin. Sufism or Islamic gnosis is the most universal affirmation of that perennial wisdom which stands at the heart of Islam and in fact of all religion as such.[37] It is this supreme doctrine of

Unity—which is itself unique *(al-tawḥīd wāḥid)*—that the Sufis call the 'religion of love' and to which Ibn 'Arabī refers in his well-known verses in the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq.*[38] This love is not merely sentiment or emotions, it is the realized aspect of gnosis. It is a transcendent knowledge that reveals the inner unity of religions. Shabistarī in his *Gulshan-i rāz* refers to this very truth when he says :

> Necessary Being is as Heaven and Hell as contingent, and 'You' are the Hades veil between them.
> When this veil is lifted up from before you,
> There remains not the bond of sects and creeds.
> All the authority of the law is over this of yours, Since that is bound to your soul and body,
> When and 'You' remain not in the midst,
> What is mosque, what is synagogue, what is fire temple?[39]

Although not all Sufis have dealt specifically with the question of other traditions, some have gone into detailed discussion of this matter. Ibn 'Arabī, one of the Sufis whose vocation it was to expound the doctrines of Sufism in their fullness, asserts openly the doctrine of the universality of revelation. He writes:

'Know that when God, the Exalted, created the creatures He created them in kinds and in each kind He placed the best and chose from the best the elite. These are the faithful (*mu'minūn*). And He chose from the faithful the elite, who are the saints, and from these elite the quintessence. These are the prophets (*anbiyā'*). And from this quintessence He chose the finest parts and they are the prophets who bring a Divine Law. ...'[40]

Ibn 'Arabī and al-Jīlī after him also elaborated the doctrine of the Logos according to which the founder of each religion is an aspect of the universal logos, which they identify with the 'Reality of Muhammad' *(al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah).*[41] The masterpiece of Ibn 'Arabī, the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam,* or *Bezels of Wisdom, is* in fact an exposition of the particular spiritual genius of each prophet as 'a Word of God'. Moreover, the Sufis believe that in the same way that each being in the Universe is the theophany (*tajallī*) of a Divine Name, so does each religion reveal an aspect of the Divine Names and Qualities. The multiplicity of religions is a direct result of the infinite richness of the Divine Being. Al-Jīlī writes:

'There is nothing in existence except that it worships God the Most High in its state and speech and acts, nay in its essence and qualities. And everything in existence obeys God Most High. But acts of worship differ because of the difference of the exigencies of the Divine Names and Qualities.'[42]

The Sufis not only assert the unity of revelation but also consider themselves as the guardians of Islam and, moreover, of all traditions. To quote al-Jīlī once again,

'The [Gnostics] are the investigators of the truth upon whom God has constructed the foundations of existence. The spheres of the worlds rotate about them. They are the centre of God's attention in the world, nay, the centre of God's [theophany] in existence.... God has erected the foundation of religion, nay, the foundation of all religions upon the ground of their gnosis.[43]

The Sufis have lived throughout Islamic history with a consciousness of the universality of the wisdom whose means of attainment they bear within their doctrines and methods. But some have had the special vocation to speak explicitly on this matter while others have remained silent. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who even had some Christian and Jewish disciples and whose *Mathnawī* is replete with verses asserting the universality of tradition, writes in his *Fīhi mā fīhi,* or *Discourses,* with direct allusion to different traditions:

'I was speaking one day amongst a group of people, and a party of non-Muslims were present. In the middle of my address they began to weep and to register emotion and ecstasy.

'Someone asked: What do they understand and what do they know?

Only one Muslim in a thousand understands this kind of talk. What did they understand, that they should weep?

'The Master answered: It is not necessary that they should under-stand the inner spirit of these words. The root of the matter is the words themselves, and that they do understand. After all, every one acknowledges the Oneness of God that He is the Creator and Provider that He controls everything, that to Him all things shall return, and that it is He who punishes and forgives. When anyone hears these words, which are a description and commemoration of God, a universal commotion and ecstatic passion supervenes, since out of these words comes the scent of their Beloved and their Quest.

'Though the ways are various, the goal is one. Do you not see that there are many roads to the Ka'ba? For some the road is from Rum, for some from Syria, for some from Persia, for some from China, for some by sea from India and Yemen. So if you consider the roads, the variety is great and the divergence infinite; but when you consider the goal, they are all of one accord and one. The hearts of all are at one upon the Ka'ba. The hearts have one attachment, an ardour and a great love for the Ka'ba, and in that there is no room for contrariety. That attachment is neither infidelity nor faith; that is to say, that attachment is not confounded with the various roads which we have mentioned. Once they have arrived there, that disputation and war and diversity touching the roads–this man saying to that man, "You are false, you are an infidel", and the other replying in kind–once they have arrived at the Ka'ba, it is realized that the warfare was concerning the roads only, that their goal was one....

'To resume: now all men in their inmost hearts love God and seek Him, pray to Him and in all things put their hope in Him, recognizing none but Him as omnipotent and ordering their affairs. Such an apperception is neither infidelity nor faith. Inwardly it has no name...

'Now the literalists take the Holy Mosque to be that Ka'ba to which people repair. Lovers, however, and the elect of God, take the Holy Mosque to mean union with God...

Continuing to expound the meaning of this union above the world of forms, he adds:

'If I were to occupy myself with expounding that subtlety, even the saints who have attained God would lose the thread of discourse. How then is it possible to speak of such mysteries and mystic states to mortal men? ... One man does not see a camel on the top of a minaret; how then shall he see the thread of a hair in the mouth of the camel?'[44]

Not everyone may be able to see the camel on the top of the minaret, much less to distinguish the hair in its mouth. But those who are possessed of such a vision are bound by duty to explain to others to the greatest extent possible what they have seen. Scholarship today can do much in bringing to life unedited texts and making known many chapters in the history of contact between Islam and other religions that have been forgotten. But it remains for the Sufis to expound the metaphysical background in the light of which particular forms can be studied and understood. That is not to say that only the perfect saint, the *wāṣil* (one who has reached the goal), can speak of the inner unity of religions. Only such a person can speak from realized and lived experience. But others who are endowed with intellectual intuition can anticipate intellectually the Centre where all the radii meet, the summit which all roads reach. Only such a vision of the Centre can provide a meaningful dialogue between religions, showing both their inner unity and formal diversity which itself contributes to the richness of modern man's spiritual life and which is given as a compensation for the spiritually starved environment in which he lives.

As far as Islam is concerned the key necessary for opening the door towards a true encounter with other religions has already been provided by Sufism. It is for contemporary Muslims to use this key and to apply the established principles to the particular condition presented to the Islamic world today. It is only through the possession of a metaphysical doctrine of distinguishing between the true and the false, grounded in traditional orthodoxy, that so many pitfalls which exist in the way of a serious study of religions can be averted. And it is only through such a doctrine that a firm basis can be established for a more formal encounter with other religions on the theological and social planes.

He who has gained a vision of that mountain top that touches the Infinite rests assured that climbers who are following other paths are nevertheless his companions on this journey which is the only meaningful journey of life itself. His certainty comes not only from the vision of the peak but also from his knowledge that those paths that have been chosen for man by God Himself do ultimately lead to the top what-ever turns they may make on the way. As far as Islam is concerned this knowledge is already contained within the treasure-house of Islamic wisdom. It is for contemporary Muslims to seek this wisdom, to make it their own and then to make use of it in conformity with their real needs.

*** From Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Sufi Essays*.**

Notes and Reference

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[1] Several authors in the West have, in fact, during the past half-century presented to the world this cardinal teaching, men like Réne Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Titus Burckhardt, Marco Pallis, Martin Lings, and especially Frithjof Schuon, whose many works, particularly *The Transcendent Unity of Religions,* have revealed with unparalleled lucidity the essential unity and, at the same time, the formal diversity of the great traditions of the world. It is a tragedy for the academic discipline of comparative religion that except for a very few cases no serious attention has been paid to these writings.

On another level one may mention the works of such scholars as Mircea Eliade, Heinrich Zimmer, Jean Herbert, Eugen Herrigel, Rudolf Otto, Henry Corbin and Louis Massignon, whose findings contribute much to

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a genuine understanding of other religions. Also among Catholic authors or those sympathetic to the point of view of Catholicism such figures as Simone Weil, Bernard Kelly, Elémire Zolla and Dom A. Graham speak in a language which has contributed profitably to an effective discourse between religions. See W. Stoddart, 'Catholicism and Zen', *Tomorrow,* vol. *XII,* no. 4, Autumn, 1964, pp. 289-96.

[2] The Holy Qur'ān says 'And We never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them' (XIV. 4).

[3] For an account of the phases that the discipline of comparative religion has undergone and the influences that have shaped it see M. Eliade, 'The Quest for the "Origins" of Religion', *History of Religions,* vol. IV, no. 1, Summer, *1964,* pp. 156.

[4] 'So little is the Western historian of religions nowadays equipped in Islamics that that discipline, to which he has hardly contributed anything, does not seem to need him. Even today, no historian of religions proper has had anything to say that would catch the attention of the men of knowledge in the Islamics field.' Isma'il R. A. al-Faruqi, 'History of Religions: Its nature and significance for Christian education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue', *Numen,* vol. XII, fasc. 1, Jan., 1965, p. 40.

Some may object to this statement by pointing to men like W. C. Smith or R. C. Zaehner who have made well-known contributions to Islamic and Iranian studies. But such men were in fact first Islamicists and Iranologists and only later went into the field of the history of religions.

[5] There has been some study of other religions by Hindus as well, but for the most part by modernized Hindus who have usually expounded a shallow 'universalism' which can only end in a mere humanitarianism or in the pseudo-spiritual cults which have sprung up everywhere in the West today. Even some genuine Hindu *bhaktas* have contributed to this situation because once out of their traditional environment, which 'thinks' for them, they do not have the power of discernment to be able to distinguish between the multitude of forms in civilizations which are alien to them.

[6] Although the author's own knowledge of the situation of other Muslim languages is limited, the same seems to be true of Turkish, Urdu, etc., except that naturally in Urdu, Bengali and other languages of the

Muslims of the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent many works can be found concerning Hindu religion and culture. But even here, since the partition of the sub-continent, very few works of substance free from transient factors and sentimental considerations have seen the light of day. The Urdu language is rich in works dealing with Hinduism, including not only translations of Hindu sacred texts (mostly from translations that had been made previously into Persian), but also new works on different aspects of Hinduism written often by Hindus themselves but in Urdu. Some Muslims also have written outstanding expositions of Hindu doctrines, such as the work of Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān Shāstrī composed in 1930 on the theory of *rasa,* which received very favourable comments from Hindu circles. But nearly all of these works belong also to the last decades of the last century and the early period of this century. See M. H. Askari, 'Tradition et modemisme dans le monde indopakistanais', *Etudes Traditionnelles,* May-June and July-August 1970, pp. 98-125.

[7] The Holy Qur'ān states: 'And for every nation there is a messenger' (X, 48).

[8] This large number of prophets indicates implicitly that all nations must have been given a religion sent to them by God. Although generally only the Abrahamic tradition has been considered, the principle of the universality of revelation applies to all nations, and Muslims applied it outside the Abrahamic family when faced with Zoroastrianism in Persia and Hinduism in India.

[9] See F. Schuon, *Understanding Islam,* chapter I.

[10] One cannot overlook the fact that there are some—although still few in number— among Westernized Muslims who, in their extreme degree of Westernization, have also begun to take an interest in Hinduism, Zen, and other oriental disciplines, but usually of the spurious kind. For them also a direct and authentic contact between Islam and these traditions can be of the greatest aid in becoming oriented spiritually. There are a few who have had direct contact with authorities belonging to these traditions, but their number *is* extremely limited.

[11] Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (*The Conference of the Birds,* trans. S. C. Nott, London, 1954, p. 13. See also H. Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele,* Leiden, 1955, pp. 607-8.

[12] The many writings of H. A. Wolfson, especially his *Philo* and his

Philosophy o the Kalām, have amply demonstrated the result of this interaction between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim theologians and the influence of Judaeo– Christian theological arguments upon the *Kalām* itself.

[13] Christ is given the supreme position of the universal 'Seal of Sanctity' *(Khātam al-wilāyah)* and is believed to be the one who will bring the cycle to a close after the advent of the Mandi. Ibn 'Arabī writes of Christ in his *Futuḥāt* (VI, 215):

> Oui, le Sceau des Saints est un Apotre
> Qui n'aura point d'égal dans le monde!
> II est !'Esprit et it est le fils de 1'Esprit et de la mere Marie C'est là
> un rang qu'aucun autre ne pourra atteindre.
> Ii descendra parmi nous en arbitre juste
> Mais non point selon les principes de sa propre loi qui aura cessé Il
> tuera le pore et confondra 1'iniquité;
> Allah sera seul son guide... .

M. Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam,* Paris, 1959, p. 260

[14] An outstanding example of a work of this kind is al-Ghazzālī's refutation of the divinity of Christ, in which, using the text of the Gospels, he argued that Christ was given special permission by God–a permission that is unique among prophets– to use the type of language that he employed concerning his union and filial relationship with God, but that in reality he never attributed divinity to himself as is commonly understood by Christians. See al-Ghazal, *Refutation excéllente de la Divinité de Jesus-Christ d'apres les Evangiles,* ed. and trans. R. Chidiac, Paris, 1939.

[15] These are three different words for silk.

[16] Trans. by E. G. Browne in his *A Literary History of Persia,* vol. IV, Cambridge, 1930, pp. 293-4.

[17] See M. Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century,* where the Shaykh's interest in other religions is amply treated in the opening chapters.

[18] See W. H. Baily, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth Century Books,* Oxford, 1943.

[19] All the Muslim sources pertaining to Manichaeism are assembled in S. H. Taqizadeh, *Mānī wa dīn-i ū,* Tehran, 1335.

[20] Even today many people in the Arab Near East refer to the Hindus as

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majūs or Zoroastrians, not making a distinction on the popular level between the Indian and Iranian traditions.

[21] The symbolism of Ḥāfiẓ's delicate and exquisite language has never been fully expounded in any Western language. One of the best translations and commentaries upon him is *The Divan, Written in the Fourteenth Century by Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i Shīrāzī otherwise known as Lisānu-l-Ghayb and Tarjumā-l-Asrār* by Lieut.-Col. H. Wilberforce Clarke, Calcutta, 2 vols., 1891.

[22] See S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* chapter II; also S. H. Nasr, 'Suhrawardi' in *A History of Muslim Philosophy.* See also the many studies of H. Corbin on Suhrawardi, especially *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica,* vol. II, Tehran, 1952, prolegomena and *Les motifs zoroastriens dons la philosophie de Sohrawardi* Tehran, 1946-1325. Al-Biruni's

[23] For a summary of Bīrūnī's views on Hinduism see A. Jeffery, 'Contribution to Comparative Religion', in *Al-Bīrūnī Commemoration Volume,* Calcutta, 1951, pp. 125-60; also S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines,* Chapter V.

[24] For two different views of the interaction between Islam and Hinduism in India see Tara Chand, *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture,* Allahabad, 1954, and A. Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in its Indian Environment,* Oxford, 1964, which also contains a rich bibliography on the subject.

[25] *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* Cairo, 1304, II, pp. 78 and 87. Of course many authors of works on religious sects denied this connection, like al-Shahristānī, who writes: 'There are those among the people who believe they [the Hindus] are called *Barāhimah* because of their affiliation to Abraham—upon whom be peace. But this is wrong, for they are a people especially known to have denied prophecy completely and totally.' *al-Milal wa 'l-niḥal,* Cairo, 1347, IV, p. 135. Needless to say this theological criticism does not in any way detract from the metaphysical significance of the assertion of al-Jili. Regarding the relation between Hinduism and Islam as the first and last traditions of this human cycle see R. Guénon, 'The Mysteries of the Letter Nūn', in *Art and Thought,* ed. K. B. Iyer, London, 1947, pp. 166–8 ; also the series of articles by M. Valsân entitled, 'Le Triangle de l'Androgyne et le monosyllable "Om" ', in *Etudes traditionnelles* of 1964 and 1965.

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[26] The Persian text of the *Upanishads* has been edited in a modern edition by Tara Chand and J. Nâ'ini as *Sirr-i akbar,* Tehran, 1957-60. See the English introduction of Tara Chand concerning Dārā Shukūh's writings and their significance. The Persian translations of Dārā Shukūh were also important for the preservation of Hindu doctrines for the Hindus themselves in the eighteenth and nineteenth century so that a nineteenth-century Hindu translator of the *Upanishads* refers to Dārā Shukūh as one of the revivers of Hinduism along with Shankarâ-charyâ and Vyasa. See M. H. Askari, 'Tradition et modernisme....', p. 120.

[27] *Ibid.,* p. 45 of Tara Chand's introduction.

[28] The profound comparative study of the *Yoga Vasishtha* by Mīr Findiriskī is a highlight of Hindu-Muslim metaphysical studies perhaps even surpassing in depth the works of Dārā Shukūh. A study is currently being made of this work by the Persian scholar, Fatḥallāh Mujtabā'ī.

[29] See S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Studies* chapter IV.

[30] Al-Shahristānī divides the Hindus into three groups, one of whom he calls *aṣḥāb al-budadah* or Buddhists. He says that the first *budd* was called shākin (Shakyamuni) and below him stands the rank of *al-bardi sa'iyah* (?) most likely meaning the Boddhisattiva. He also gives some account of Buddhist asceticism and moral teachings. *op. cit.,* pp. 139 *ff.*

[31] See K. Jahn, 'On the mythology and religion of the Indians in the medieval Moslem tradition', in *Melanges Henri Masse* pp. 185-97.

[32] See K. Jahn, 'Kāmalashrī-Rashīd al-Dīn's "Life and teaching of the Buddha', *Central Asiatic Journal,* vol. II, 1956, pp. 81-128.

[33] See, for example, the *Kashf al-maḥjūb of* Abū Ya'qūb Sijistānī, ed. H. Corbin, Jāmi' al-Tehran, 1949, pp. 77-9, on the necessity of the plurality of prophets and religions because of changing conditions of the people to whom revelation is addressed. The author adds that each prophet reveals an aspect of the truth and the Divine Law so that it is necessary to have many prophets to reveal the different aspects of truth and also reaffirm what came before in the way of revelation.

Likewise Nāṣir-i Khusraw in his *Jāmi' al-ḥikmatayn,* ed. H. Corbin and M. Mo'in, Tehran, 1953, speaks *of* Christ as the 'Word of God' and *of* the universality of the prophetic chain before the Prophet of Islam. The universality of revelation is a permanent theme of both Twelve-Imam Shiite and Ismaili theology as it is with Sufism in general, although the

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standpoint remains within the bounds of the Abrahamic tradition.

[34] This important work edited by H. Ritter as *Die dogmatischen Lehren der Anhanger des Islam,* Wiesbaden, 1963, as well as al-Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-mulḥidīn,* which is its complementary volume dealing more directly with non-Islamic groups and sects, reveals how much interest the study of religions held for even those Muslim theologians who tried to oppose rationalistic discourse on religion and were the defenders of the letter of the revelation.

Some theologians dealt even in their theological works, with the history of religions, which they treated in a separate section; al-Ījī in his *al-Mawāqif* provides an example.

[35] The very commendable work of Kenneth Morgan and a few others in America and England should here be mentioned, their aim being to provide means of learning about religions based on the writings of those who believe in them and live within their world view; this method of approaching the subject could also be adopted by Muslims with advantage. If Muslims want to know about Christianity it is best to seek this knowledge from a Christian who believes in it, not one who has 'outgrown' it in his own mind. And for even stronger reasons they should want to hear from a Buddhist about Buddhism or a Hindu about Hinduism or to learn of these religions from the very few Western authors who have either themselves had direct contact with these traditions or are particularly endowed both through inner sympathy and innate intelligence to understand the forms and symbols of other religions than their own. The large number of second-hand works on comparative religion now being translated from European languages into Arabic, Persian, etc., calls for a definite Muslim answer before, in yet another field of study, the minds of modern educated Muslims become fatally contaminated. Until now only a few works based on genuine sources have appeared, but they are far too few to answer the need for such literature today.

[36] The figure of Hermes invoked by Suhrawardī and many other Muslim sages as the bringer of a revelation which was the origin of all philosophy or rather theosophy, signifies belief in the universality of wisdom, the *religio perennis.*

For the importance of the figure of Hermes as the symbol of a primordial religion see M. Eliade, 'The Quest for the "Origins of

Religion", pp. 154-6. How-ever, it is of great significance that the Hermetic movement in the Renaissance was essentially against the all-embracing medieval Christian tradition, whereas in Islam the figure of Hermes fitted perfectly well into Islamic prophetology.

[37] It is this gnosis which stands as the best proof of the truth of religion as such because the gnostic sees religion as an inseparable aspect of human existence. There is no better proof of the existence of God than man, 'who confirms his creator through his theomorphic nature and particularly through his intelligence which stands as the proof of the Absolute that is its real object.

'Human nature in general and human intelligence in particular cannot be understood apart from the phenomenon of religion, which characterizes them in the most direct and most complete way possible. If we can grasp the transcendent nature (not the "psychological" nature) of the human being, we thereby grasp the nature of revelation, of religion, of tradition; we understand their possibility, their necessity, their truth. And in understanding religion, not only in a particular form or according to some verbal specification, but also in its formless essence, we understand the religions, that is to say, the meaning of their plurality and their diversity; this is the plane of gnosis, of the *religio perennis,* whereon the extrinsic antimonies of dogma are explained and resolved.' F. Schuon, 'Religio Perennis', in *Light on the Ancient Worlds,* p. 142.

[38] My heart has become capable of every form: it is
a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christians
And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba and
the tables of the Torah, and the book of the Koran.
I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels
take, that is my religion and my faith.

Tarjumān al-ashwāq, trans. by R. A. Nicholson, London, 1911, p. 67; see also S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages,* pp. 116-18.

It need hardly be pointed out that this vision of the transcendent unity of religions stands at the very antipodes of the modern syncretisms and pseudo-spiritualities which have been growing during the past few decades as a result of the weakening of tradition in the West. Not only do they not succeed in transcending forms but they fall beneath them, opening the door to all kinds of evil forces affecting those who are unfortunate enough to *be* duped by their so-called universalism.

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[39] *Gulshan-i rāz,* p. 31.

[40] *Al-Futuḥāt al-makkiyyah,* Cairo, 1293, vol. II, pp. 73-74.
Al-Insān al-kāmil, II, pp. 76-7.

[41] This fundamental doctrine expounded mostly in the *Fusus* of Ibn 'Arabī and the *Al-Insān al-kāmil* of al-Jīlī has been explained with remarkable clarity in the introduction and notes of the masterly translations of these works by T. Burckhardt, *La Sagesse des prophètes* and *De l'homme universel.*
The doctrine of the Logos according to Ibn 'Arabī is also summarized in his *Shajarat al-kawn.* See the translation of it by A. Jeffery in *Studia Islamica, vol. X,* pp. 43-77, and vol. XI, pp. 113-60. His notes and explanations, however, do not at all accord with the Islamic view.

[42] *Al-Insān al-kāmil,* II, pp. 76-7.

[43] Ibid., p.83
In fact has not this assertion of this great medieval Sufi been realized during this century by those who have sought to defend all traditions against forces that threaten not only a particular religion but religion itself?

[44] *Discourses of Rumi,* trans. by A. J. Arberry, London, 1961, pp. 108-12. One must be grateful to Professor Arberry for making available to the outside world this rather remarkable work of Rumi which reveals an aspect of Sufism not often found in more formal Sufi texts.

ISLAM'S ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHER RELIGIONS IN HISTORY

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

In light of what has been said of the Islamic conception of revelation and religious diversity, it is important to mention that before modern times Islam was the only revealed religion to have had direct contact with nearly all the major religions of the world. It had met Judaism and Christianity in its birthplace in Arabia and afterward in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt; the Iranian religions such as Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism after its conquest of Persia in the seventh century; Hinduism and Buddhism in eastern Persia and India shortly thereafter; the Chinese religions through the Silk Route as well as through Muslim merchants who traveled to Canton and other Chinese ports; the African religions soon after the spread of Islam into Black Africa some four-teen hundred years ago; and Siberian Shamanism in the form of the archaic religions of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples as they descended into the Islamic world. Centuries ago Zoroaster and the Buddha were common household names among Muslims of the eastern lands of the Islamic world, especially Persia. Indian Muslims had come to know of Krishna and Rama a thousand years ago. The Persian polymath al-Biruni had composed a major work on India in the eleventh century, one that is still a valuable source of knowledge for medieval Hinduism. Furthermore, numerous works of classical Hinduism and some of Buddhism were translated into Persian centuries ago, including the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Chinese Muslim scholars knew the Confucian classics and many considered Confucius and Lao-Tze prophets.

The global nature of the religious knowledge of a learned Muslim sitting in Isfahan in the fourteenth century was very different from that of a scholastic thinker in Paris or Bologna of the same period. On the basis of the Qur'ānic doctrine of religious universality and the vast historical experiences of a global nature, Islamic civilization developed a cosmopolitan and worldwide religious perspective unmatched before the modern period in any other religion. This global vision is still part and parcel of the worldview of traditional Muslims, of those who have not abandoned their universal vision as a result of the onslaught of modernism or reactions to this onslaught in the form of what has come to be called "fundamentalism."

Within this global religious context, it is, of course, the Jewish and Christian traditions with which Islam has the greatest affinity. The Hebrew prophets and Christ are deeply respected by Muslims. The Virgin Mary is considered by the Qur'ān to hold the most exalted spiritual position among women. A chapter of the Qur'ān is named after her, and she is the only woman mentioned by name in Islam's sacred scripture. Moreover, the miraculous birth of Christ from a virgin mother is recognized in the Qur'ān. Respect for such teachings is so strong among Muslims thattoday, in interreligious dialogues with Christians and Jews, Muslims are often left defending traditional Jewish and Christian doctrines such as the miraculous birth of Christ before modernist interpreters who would reduce them to metaphors and the sacred history of the Hebrew prophets to at best inspired stories.

The sacred figures of Judaism and Christianity are often mentioned in the Qur'ān and even in prayers said on various occasions. The tombs of the Hebrew prophets, who are also Islamic prophets, are revered and visited in pilgrimage by Muslims to this day. One need only recall the holiness for Muslims of the tomb of Abraham in al-Khalil, or Hebron, in Palestine, of that of Joshua in Jordan, and of Moses' resting place on Mt. Nebo, also in Jordan. Some Muslims have occasionally criticized intellectually and also engaged militarily Jews and Christians, but they have not criticized the Jewish prophets or Christ (even if certain theological differences with followers of Judaism and Christianity did exist), at least not those who have heeded the call of the Qur'ān and understood its message. Islam sees itself as the third of the Abrahamic religions, which are bound together by countless theological, ethical, and eschatological beliefs even though they are marked by differences willed by God.

To speak of the Judeo-Christian tradition against which Islam is pitted as the "other" is an injustice to the message of Abraham and also theologically false, no matter how convenient it might be for some people. There is as much difference between Judaism and Christianity as there is between Christianity and Islam. In certain domains Judaism is closer to Islam than it is to Christianity: it has a sacred language, Hebrew, like Arabic in Islam, and it has a sacred law, the *Halakhah*, corresponding to the *Sharīʿah*.

Furthermore, they share an opposition to all forms of idolatry and to the creation of iconic sacred art, which would allow an image of the Divinity to be painted or sculpted. In certain other ways Islam is closer to Christianity: both emphasize the immortality of the soul, eschatological realities, and the accent on the inner life. Then there are those basic principles upon which all three religions agree: the Oneness of God, prophecy, sacred scripture, much of sacred history, and basic ethical norms such as the sanctity of life, reverence for the laws of God, humane treatment of others, honesty in all human dealings, kindness toward the neighbor, the application of justice, and so forth. Islam is an inalienable and inseparable part of the Abrahamic family of religions and considers itself to be closely linked with the two monotheistic religions that preceded it. Islam envisages itself the complement of those religions and the final expression of Abrahamic monotheism, confirming the teachings of Judaism and Christianity, but rejecting any form of exclusivism.

Who Is A Believer And Who Is An Infidel?

With this framework in mind, it will be easier to understand the categorization in Islam of people into believers (*mu'mins*) and what has been translated in the West as "infidels" or "nonbelievers" (*kāfirs*), which means literally "those who cover over the truth." Every religion has a way of distinguishing itself from the other religions. Judaism speaks of Jews and Gentiles, and Christianity of the faithful and the heathens or pagans. Each of these categorizations has both a theological and a popular and historical root related to the self-understanding as well as the history of that religion. In the case of Islam, the distinction is based more on the question of faith, or *īmān*, and less on the more general term *islām*. In the Qur'ān faith implies a higher level of participation in the religion, as we shall discuss in the next chapter, and even today only those who take their religion very seriously and are virtuous are called *mu'min* (or possessors of *īmān*). And yet the Qur'ān does not limit the term *mu'min* only to those who follow the Islamic religion; it includes the faithful of Islam along with followers of other religions, as is evidenced by the Qur'ānic assertion, "Verily, those who have faith [in what is revealed to the Prophet] and those who are Jews and Christians and Sabaeans—whosoever has faith in God and the Last Day and does right—surely their reward is with their Lord, and no fear shall overcome them and neither shall they grieve" (2:62). In this verse as well as verse 69 of Surah 5 ("The Table Spread"), which nearly repeats the same message, recognition of other religions is extended even beyond Judaism, Christianity, and Sabaeanism to include "whosoever has faith in God," and the possibility of salvation is also made explicitly universal. Likewise, the boundary between the Muslim faithful and the faithful of other religions is lifted. One could therefore say that in the most universal sense whoever has faith and accepts the One God, nor the Supreme Principle, is a believer, or *mu'min*, and whoever does not is an infidel, or a *kāfir*, whatever the nominal and external ethnic and even religious identification of that person might be.

As a result of this explicit universality of the Qur'ānic text, the use of the terms "believer" or "faithful" and "infidel" or "nonbeliever" is much more complicated than what we find in Christianity. In Islam there is, first of all, the Sufi metaphysical view of absolute Truth, which is seen to be beyond all duality, even beyond the dichotomy of *īmān* and *kufr*, or faith and infidelity; yet, to reach that transcendent Truth beyond all duality one must begin with faith and start from the formal foundations of Islam, which distinguishes itself clearly from *kufr*. The esoteric understanding of *kufr* and *īmān*, so prevalent in classical Sufi poetry, especially among the Persian poets such as Rūmī, Shabistarī, and Ḥāfiẓ must not, therefore, be confused with the prevalent idea in certain Western circles that one can reach the absolute Truth by simply avoiding the world of faith as well as infidelity. On the levels of external religious forms, *īmān* has to do with truth and *kufr* with falsehood. This dichotomy is not destroyed by the exhortation of the Sufis to go beyond *kufr* and *īmān*, which means to reach *tawḥīd*, or oneness beyond all oppositions and dichotomies.

On the formal and popular plane, traditional Muslims have often used the category of "believer" or "faithful" for Muslims as well as followers of other religions, especially Christians and Jews. But there have been also historical periods in which the term "faithful" was reserved for Muslims and *kāfir*, or "infidel," was used for non-Muslims, as in the Ottoman Empire, where Europeans were called *kuffār*, infidels. The situation is, however, made even more complicated by the fact that throughout Islamic history certain Muslim groups have called other Muslim groups infidels, some even going to the extent of treating them in practice as enemies. For example, during early Islamic history the Khawārij, who opposed both the Sunnis and Shiites as infidels, attacked both groups physically and militarily. Later, Ismāʿīlis were considered *kuffār* by many Sunni scholars, and even in mainstream Islam over the centuries some Sunni and Twelve-Imam Shiite scholars have called each other *kāfir*. In the eighteenth century the Wahhabi movment, which began in Najd in Arabia, considered orthodox Sunnis and Shiites both not to be genuine Muslims, and often cast the anathema of being infidels, or what is called *takfīr*, upon them, while many Ottoman Hanafi scholars considered the Wahhabis themselves to be *kuffār*.

The prevalent image in the West that all Muslims are united as the faithful against the infidels– even if some well-known Christian preachers repeat to their flocks this assertion made by some extremists within the Islamic world– is simply not true. There have always been those who have spoken of the necessity of the unity of Muslims as the faithful, and in a certain sense that unity has been always there despite diversity on many levels. But the whole question of who is a believer, or a person of faith, and who is an unbeliever, or infidel, requires a much more nuanced answer than is usually given in generally available sources.

Moreover, the term *kāfir* has both a theological and judicial definition and a popular political and social definition, and the two should not be confused. In the conscience of many devout Muslims, a pious Christian or Jew is still seen as a believer, while an agnostic with an Arabic or Persian name is seen as a *kāfir*. And the anathema of *kufr*, far from involving only outsiders, has also concerned various groups within the Islamic world itself. Today, even while some Muslims hold "infidels" responsible for the onslaught of a secularist culture from the West, they also use the same characterization for those within the Islamic world itself who, while still formally Muslim, accept and preach secularist ideas that negate the very foundations of the Islamic rev-elation. As a matter of fact, secularism is the common enemy of all the Abrahamic traditions, and the erosion of moral authority in secular societies that we observe today, poses as many problems for Jews and Christians as it does for Muslims.

Islam and Religious Pluralism Today

Muslims today continue to experience the presence of other 1 religions in their midst as they have done over the centuries. In the middle part of the Islamic world there are Christian minorities, the largest being in Egypt, and still some Jews, especially in Iran and Turkey, although most of the Jews from Arab countries migrated to Israel after 1948. There are still Zoroastrians in Iran, and Muslims live with Hindus in India, of course, but also in Bangladesh, Nepal, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and with Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Ladakh, Burma, China, and elsewhere. They also live with Confucians and Taoists not in only China, but also in Malaysia and Indonesia. By and large, through most periods of Islamic history, the relation between Muslims and religious minorities living in their midst has been peaceful. Exceptions have arisen when severe political issues, such as the partition of Palestine or India, have altered ordinary relations between Muslims and followers of other religions. Today, despite some abuses here and there issuing from so-called fundamentalist currents in various Islamic countries, religious minorities in the Islamic world usually fare better than Muslim minorities do in other lands, except in America and some Western countries, where they have been able to practice their religion until now without manifest or hid-den restrictions. All one has to do is to compare the situation of the Christian minorities of Syria, Iraq, and Iran, three states not known for their leaning toward the West, with Muslim minorities in China, the Philippines, India, and the Russian Caucasus, not to speak of the Balkans, where the horror inflicted by Christian Serbs upon Muslim Bosnians and Kosovars is still fresh in everyone's memory.

The peaceful presence in the Islamic world of various religious minorities, especially Christians, has been upset to a large extent in recent times by Western missionary activity, which has caused severe reaction not only among Muslims, but also among Hindus, Buddhists, and others. This question of Christian missionary activity (of the Western churches, not Orthodoxy) is a complicated matter requiring an extensive separate treatment, but it must be mentioned briefly here. Suffice it to say that, as far as the Islamic world is concerned, this activity was from the be-ginning of the modern period combined with colonialism, and many Western Christian missionaries have preached as much secularized Western culture as Christianity. Many of them have tried and still try to propagate Christianity not through the teachings of Christ alone, but mostly by the appeal of material aid such as rice and medicine, given in the name of Christian charity, but with the goal of conversion. Many of their schools have been happy if they could wean the Muslim students away from firm belief in Islam, even if they could not make them Christian. It is not accidental that some of the most virulent anti-Western secularized Arab political leaders of the past decades have been graduates of American schools in the Middle East first established by missionaries, schools where these students were religiously and culturally uprooted.

To understand current Islamic reactions to Christian missionary activity in many countries, one should ask how the people of Texas and Oklahoma, where many American evangelists come from, would respond to the following scenario. Suppose that, with vast oil money from the Islamic world, Islamic schools were to be established in those states. Because of their prestige, these schools attracted the children of the most powerful and well-to-do families, and these future leaders, in attending these schools, underwent a systematic process of cultural Arabization even if they did not participate in the encouraged formal conversion to Islam.

Western missionary activity is not like that of medieval Christian preachers of the Gospels, or like the Orthodox missionaries among the Inuits of Canada, who would adopt the language of the Inuits and even their dress. Most modern Western missionary activity throughout Asia and Africa has meant, above all, Westernization and globalization combined with the cult of consumerism, all in the name of Christianity. Were there not to be such a powerful political, economic, and even military pressure behind the presence of these missionaries, then their presence would be in a sense like that of Tibetan Buddhists or Muslims in Canada or the United States and would not pose a danger to the very existence of local religions and cultures. But the situation is otherwise, and therefore Christian missionary activity, especially in such places as Indonesia, Pakistan, and sub-Saharan Africa, plays a very important role in creating tension between Islam and Christianity and indirectly the West, which gives material and political support to these missionaries even if, as in France, the state is avowedly secularist.

Of course, this identification with modern Western secularist and now consumerist culture has not always been the case with all missionaries. The French Catholic Pere de Foucault lived for a long time among Muslim North Africans as a humble witness to Christ and was greatly respected by his Muslim neighbours, as were a number of other monksand priests. There have also been humble Protestants who came to Muslims to represent a presence of Christ's message without aggressive proselytizing through material enticement of the poor. Such exceptions have certainly existed. Nevertheless, Western Christian missionary activity, supported as it is directly or indirectly by all the might of the West, poses a major problem for contemporary Muslims' dealings with Western Christianity, in contrast to local forms of Christianity with which Muslims have lived usually in peace for centuries\

One need only recall in this con-text that while Baghdad was being bombed during the Persian Gulf War, no Iraqi Muslims attacked any local Iraqi Christians walking down the street, whereas the reverse has not been true since the tragic September 11 terrorist acts; a number of American and European Muslims have been attacked and harassed as a result of the religious, racial, and ethnic xenophobia that has been created in certain circles by that great tragedy.

In speaking of missionary activity, it is necessary to say something about Islamic teachings concerning apostasy (*irtidād*), which has been criticized by missionary circles and others in the West. According to classical interpretations of the *Sharīʿah*, the punishment for apostasy for a Muslim is death, and this is interpreted by many Westerners to mean the lack of freedom of conscience in Islam. To clarify this issue, first of all, a few words about conversion. The Qurʾān says, "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256), and in most periods of Islamic history there was no forced conversion of the "People of the Book." In fact, forced conversion is an affront to God and the dignity of the human conscience created by Him. Arabia at the time of the Qurʾānic revelation was an exception. There the pagan Arabs who practiced a most crass form of polytheism were given the choice of either becoming Muslims or battling against them. It was very similar to the choice offered by j Christian to European "pagans" once Christianity gained power on that continent. But even in Arabia, the Jews and Christians were not forced to become Muslims.

The *Sharīʿite* ruling on apostasy may therefore seem strange in light of Islam's attitude toward other heavenly inspired religions. The reason for such a ruling must be sought in the fact that attachment to Islam was related before modern times to being a member of the Islamic state as well as community, and therefore apostasy was seen as treason against the state, not just religious conversion. Today when the state is no longer Islamic in the traditional sense in most Islamic countries, many religious scholars have spoken against capital punishment for apostasy. More over, in practice, although the law is still "on the books," in many places it is hardly ever applied, as can be seen by the presence of several million Christians converted from Islam by Western missionaries in recent times in such countries as Indonesia, Pakistan, and several West African nations. In practice this law is somewhat like laws against adultery that are still "on the books" in England, but not applied. Sectarian fighting between Muslims and newly converted Christians still occurs in Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, the Sudan, and a few other places, but these have more to do with local political, economic, and social issues than with the traditional *Sharī'ite* ruling about apostasy.

The traditional *Sharī'ite* ruling, which is now being amended by some legal authorities and for the most part ignored because of changed conditions, must be understood not in the context of the modern West, where religion has been to a large extent marginalized and pushed away from the public arena, but in the framework of the Christian West. One only has to think what would have happened to Christians in medieval France or seventeenth-century Spain if they had converted to Islam. In any case, the question of apostasy raised so often by those who ask about Islam's relation to other religions must be under-stood in both its classical context and the present-day situation, when it is largely overlooked because of changed conditions and is, in fact, being reinterpreted by a number of important Islamic legal experts.

Another issue often raised in the West when discussing Islam s relation to other religions is that Islam does not allow the presence of non-Muslims in a certain area around Mecca while Christianity allows non-Christians even into the Vatican. Now, it must be understood that each religion has its own regulations concerning sacred spaces. In Hinduism certain areas in Benares are closed to all non-Hindus, and Muslims respected those rules even when they ruled over that city and did not force their way into the Monkey Temple or other sacred sites. Like Hinduism and several other religions, Islam has a sacred space around Mecca whose boundaries were designated by the Prophet himself and where non-Muslims are not allowed.

That has never meant that the rest of the Islamic world has been closed to the presence of other religions and their houses of worship. Churches dot the skyline of Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and many other cities, and synagogues are also found everywhere a Jewish community lives from Tehran to Fez. Within the Ottoman Empire in many places in the Balkans where Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived together, synagogues, churches, and mosques were built next to each other. To this day this harmonious presence of different houses of worship is visible in Istanbul itself. Outside of the *ḥarīm*, or sacred precinct, in Arabia, it is the duty of the Muslim state, according to the *Sharīʿah*, to' allow the building and maintenance of houses of worship of the "People of the Book," and any order to the contrary is against the tenets of Islamic Law and traditional practice, of course, during Islamic history there were occasions is when after a major triumph a church was converted into a mosque, as happened with the Hagia Sophia, but the reverse also took place often, as when the Grand Mosque of Cordova was converted into a cathedral. Altogether for Islam, the general norm is the one established by `Umar, who, when he conquered Jerusalem, ordered the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be honoured and protected as a church. Otherwise, most of the churches in the Islamic world that later became mosques were those abandoned by Christian worshipers, somewhat like what one sees in some cities in Great Britain these days.

On the intellectual plane, there is a great deal of interest in the Islamic world today in religious dialogue, the impetus for which originated in Christian circles mostly after World War II. In many countries, such as Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia, religious dialogue has even been encouraged by governments as well as by individuals and religious organizations. Numerous conferences have been held in many parts of the world with Protestants, Catholics, and more recently Orthodox Christians; with Hindus in India and Indonesia; and with Buddhists and Confucians in Malaysia. Because of the Palestinian-Israeli problem, the dialogue with Judaism has been somewhat more difficult, but even that has also continued to some extent in both the Middle East and the West. In these dialogues scholars from many different schools of thought have participated, both those within the Islamic world and those Muslims living in the West. There have been some exclusivists who have opposed such dialogues, as one sees also among Christians and Jews, but the activity of religious dialogue has gone on for decades in the Islamic world and is now an important part of the current Islamic religious and intellectual landscape.

Even on the more theoretical and philosophical level, what has come to be known as religious pluralism has become a matter of great interest and a major intellectual challenge in many Islamic countries today, including some of those called "fundamentalist" in the West. There is no country in the Islamic world in which there is greater interest in the theological and philosophical questions involved in the issue of religious pluralism than Iran. There works of such famous Protestant and Catholic writers on the subject as John Hick and Hans Kung have been translated and are being discussed even in the public media; there the views of traditionalist metaphysicians such as Frithjof Schuon, who speaks of the "transcendent unity of religions," a view that is also my own, are part and parcel of the general intellectual discourse. The same keen interest is also to be found in countries as different as Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia.

Faced with the danger of loss of identity and the enfeeblement of religion as a result of the onslaught of modernism with its secularist bias, some Muslims, many very active and vocal, espouse a radical exclusivist point of view when it comes to the question of the relation of Islam to other religions. But for the vast majority of Muslims, the Qur'ānic doctrine of the universality of revelation and the plurality of prophets under the One God still resonates deeply in their hearts and souls, and they remain ever mindful of the many verses of the Qur'ān concerning the reality of One God and the multiplicity of revelations sent by Him. When they think of their beloved Prophet, they are mindful of these words of God:

> We inspire thee [Muhammad] as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and as We imparted unto David the Psalms;
>
> And messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee; and God spoke directly to Moses;
>
> Messengers of good news and warning; in order that mankind might have no argument against God after the messengers. God is Mighty, and Wise. (4:163–65)

* From Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values of Humanity.*

ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS— THE UNIVERSALITY AND PARTICULARITY OF PROPHECY

William C. Chittick

Prophecy is the means whereby God offers guidance to human beings through human intermediaries. Just as God's mercy takes precedence over his wrath and thereby determines the nature of wrath, so also God's guidance takes precedence over his misguidance. Guidance itself demands the existence of misguidance. Without the misguidance that is embodied by Satan, the prophetic messages would be meaningless. Without distance, there can be no nearness; without wrong, no right; without darkness, no perception of light. All the distinctions that allow for a cosmos to exist depend upon the diversification and differentiation of the divine qualities. On the moral and spiritual level, this diversification becomes manifest through the paths of guidance and misguidance, represented by the prophets and the satans.

Wherever there have been prophets, there have been satans. The Qur'ān uses the word satans to refer both to some of the jinn and to some human beings. To be a satan is to be an enemy of the prophets and an embodiment of misguidance:

> *We have appointed to every prophet an enemy-satans from among mankind and jinn, revealing fancy words to each*

WE-10

> *other as delusion. Yet, had thy Lord willed, they would never haw done it. So leave them with what they are fabricating. (6:112)*

Just as Adam, our father and the first prophet, was faced with Iblis, so also we are faced with Iblis, his offspring, and their followers. Misguidance is a universal phenomenon, found in the outside world and within ourselves. In the same way, guidance is a universal phenomenon. In other words, the human race is inconceivable without both prophets and satans, because human beings are defined by the freedom they received when they were made in the divine form. They are able to choose among the divine attributes, because all the divine attributes are found within themselves. Just as they can choose God's right hand by following guidance, so also they can choose his left hand by following misguidance. Without that choice, they would not have been free to accept the Trust.

As we have seen,[1] the fundamental message of the prophets is *tawḥīd.* In the Islamic perspective, all prophets have brought the first Shahādah: "We never sent a messenger before thee save that We revealed to him, saying, There is no god but I, so worship Me'" (21:25). In contrast to the first Shahādah, which designates a divine guidance that is embodied by all prophets, the second Shahādah refers to the domain of the specific message brought by Muhammad. Other prophets had their own messages that correspond to the second Shahādah:

> *Every nation has its messenger.* (10:47)
>
> *We have sent no messenger saw with the tongue of his people.* (14:4)
>
> *To every one of you [messengers] We have appointed a right way and an open road.* (5:48)

The Qur'ān insists that Muslims should not differentiate among the prophets of God. Each prophet, after all, was sent by God with guidance, and the primary message of each is the same:

> *Say: We haw faith in God, and in that which has been sent*

> *down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them, and to Him we have submitted* (2:136; cf. 2:285, 3:84)

The Qur'ān tells us in several verses that the later prophets came to confirm the messages of the earlier prophets:

> *And when Jesus son of Mary said, "Children of Israel, I am indeed God's messenger to you, confirming the Torah that has gone before me. . . ."* (61:6)
>
> *He has sent down upon thee the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as guidance to* the people. (3:3)

At the same time, the Qur'ān makes clear that the details of the messages differ. Any distinction that can be made among the messengers has to be made on the basis of the difference in their messages:

> *And those messengers— some We have preferred above others. Among them was he to whom God spoke, and He raised some in degrees. And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear explications, and We confirmed him with the Holy Spirit* (2:253)
>
> *And We haw preferred some prophets over others, and We gave David the Psalms.* (17:55)

The idea that every messenger comes with a message that is specific to the people to whom he was sent and that differs in details from other messages is deeply rooted in the Islamic consciousness and is reflected in the titles that are customarily given to the great messengers in Islamic texts. Each title designates the special quality of the messenger that distinguishes him from other messengers. Thus, one of the verses just quoted refers to him "to whom God spoke." Most commentators think that this is a reference to Moses, to whom Islamic sources give the title *kalīm* (speaking companion), because God spoke to him from the burning bush without the intermediary of Gabriel, and because the Qur'ān says, "And unto Moses We spoke directly" (4:164). But the commentators add that it may also refer to Adam, to whom God spoke in the Garden, and to Muhammad, to whom God spoke during Muhammad's ascent to God (the *mi'raj*). In a similar way, Jesus is usually called God's "spirit" and Abraham his "close friend" (*khalīl*).

In Islamic countries, especially among people untouched by modern education, there is a common belief that all religions accept the first Shahādah, but that each religion has a specific second Shahādah that differs from that of the Muslims. Thus it is thought that the Christians say, "There is no god but God and Jesus is the spirit of God," while the Jews say, "There is no god but God and Moses is God's speaking companion."

The Qur'ān recognizes explicitly that, although the first Shahādah never changes, the domain covered by the second Shahādah differs from message to message. Hence, all the laws that are proper to Jews, for example, are not necessarily proper for Christians, nor do the rulings of the Muslim Sharī'ah have any universality (despite the claims of some Muslims). For example, in the following verse, God explains that the Jews have prohibitions that do not apply to Muslims:

> *And to the Jewry We haw forbidden every beast with claws; and of oxen and sheep We have forbidden them the fat of them, saw what their backs carry, or their entrails, or what is mingled with the bone.* (6:146)

Similarly, the Qur'ān places the following words, which are directed at the Children of Israel, in Jesus' mouth, thus indicating that his Sharī'ah differs from that of Moses.

> *[I have been sent] to confirm the truth of the Torah that is before me, and to make lawful to you certain things that before were forbidden unto you.* (3:50)

An often recited prayer at the end of Sura 2 of the Qur'ān says, "Our Lord . . .. charge us not with a burden such as Thou didst lay upon those before us" (2:286). The commentators say that this refers to the Torah, which is a heavy burden, in contrast to the Muslim Sharī'ah, which, in the words of a hadith, is "easy, congenial" (*sahl, samḥ*).

One of the most delightful expressions of the differing messages entrusted to the prophets is found in the standard accounts of the Prophet's ascent to God, the *miʿrāj.* As we saw earlier, Muhammad met a number of prophets on his way up through the heavens. When he met God, God gave him instructions for his community. On the way back down, Muhammad stopped in each heaven to bid farewell to the prophets. In the sixth heaven, right below the seventh, he met Moses. Moses asked him what sort of acts of worship God had given him for his community. He replied that God had given him fifty *ṣalāts* per day. Moses told him that he had better go back and ask God to lighten the burden. He knew from sorry experience that the people would not be able to carry out such difficult instructions. The Prophet continues:

> *I went back, and when He had reduced them by ten, I returned to Moses. Moses said the same as before, so I went back, and when He had reduced them by ten more, I returned to Moses...*

Finally, after Muhammad had moved back and forth between God and Moses several times, God reduced the *ṣalāts* to five. Moses then said to Muhammad:

> *Your people are not capable of observing five ṣalāts. I have tested people before your time and have laboured earnestly to prevail over the Children of Israel. So go back to your Lord and ask Him to make things lighter for your people.*

But by this point, the Prophet was too embarrassed to continue asking for reductions. Hence he said: "I have asked my Lord till I am ashamed, but now I am satisfied and I submit."

Nowadays, discussion of Islamic teachings about prophecy can quickly raise emotions among Muslims. Probably the main reason for this is that in many Islamic countries, religion plays a far greater role in daily life than it does in Europe and America. Hence, generally speaking, political positions are posed in religious terms, and opposition to the policies of other countries can take the form of criticism of other religions.

A second factor that helps keep emotions high in discussions of prophecy is that modernized Muslims commonly take the attitude— as do many people in the West as well— that it is not they who are at fault. Shortcomings must belong to other people, and so whatever the problem may be, the blame must lie in the opponent's court. This attitude is common throughout the world. For those who recognize the truth of myth, it is highly significant that Iblis was the first person to put the blame in the other's court. It is he who said, "Now, because You have led me astray...." (7:16). If people followed the example of Adam and Eve, they would look more closely at themselves and find room to recognize that "We have wronged ourselves" (7:23).

Do not think that Iblis's position is found only in politics. It is an everyday reality for all of us. For example, think about the way in which students react when they receive their grades. It is not uncommon to hear someone say, "I got an A in physics, but that lousy English teacher gave me a C." This is Iblis's reaction— the light is mine, but he led me astray. I did good, but any evil is someone else's fault. The reaction of Adam and Eve would be the following: "How kind of that physics teacher to give me an A, but I really messed up in English and received a C-, so I will have to work much harder to make up for my own shortcomings."

In short, in the contemporary political situation, ideology is often posed in terms of the war of good against evil. In such a situation, those who would stress the universality of the Qur'ānic message rarely meet with much success. It is too easy to think that the other guy is at fault and we are fine. And in order to think that way, it is necessary to forget that God's mercy extends to all creatures. If people did remember that God's mercy takes precedence over his wrath, they might have to start searching for faults in themselves and to leave the others to God. They might have to accept that the C- was a gift and that they should have flunked.

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Qur'ānic depiction of the role of prophets in human history is highly nuanced. On the basis of the Qur'ānic text, we can neither claim that Islam has exclusive rights to the truth nor that other religions are valid without qualification. Rather, all prophets have come with the truth from God, but their followers do not always observe the teachings that the prophets brought. Hence, the Qur'ān frequently criticizes the followers of the two religions with which the early Muslim community had contact, Judaism and Christianity. It maintains that many Jews and Christians have not lived up to God's message to them, a point that has been made by Jewish and Christian reformers throughout history.

Many Muslims would like to make this a universal judgment against other religions, claiming that Islam is the only valid religion left on the face of the earth and forgetting that there is no reason to suppose that Islam is exempt from the same sorts of distortion. Other Muslims do not agree with the sweeping condemnations that fundamentalists of all religious persuasions issue against their perceived enemies. There is, in short, no consensus among contemporary or past Muslims on the issue of Islam and other religions. But the Qur'ān and the classical commentaries offer plenty of room for a view of things that is full of subtlety and nuance.

Among the general statements the Qur'ān makes about the religions brought by the prophets is the following, found in two places in the text:

> *Those who haw faith, and those of the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans— whoso has faith in God and the Last Day and works wholesome deeds-their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they sorrow.* (2:62, 5:69)

The key issue here, as should be obvious by now, is faith in God. In the Islamic view, faith in God demands *tawḥīd*, and *tawḥīd* is the message of all the prophets. To the extent that *tawḥīd* is established, salvation is assured. So important is the first Shahādah, through which *tawḥīd* is expressed, that a hadith found in one of the most reliable sources tells us, "He who dies knowing that there is no god but God will enter the Garden." Notice that this hadith does not even mention faith. Simply to know the truth of *tawḥīd* is sufficient. Another hadith makes a similar point. On the day of resurrection, God will busy himself with weighing good and evil deeds in the scales. The good deeds of each person will be put in one pan and the evil deeds in the other. If good deeds predominate, the person will go to paradise, but if evil deeds predominate, he or she will be thrown into hell. One of the people brought to be judged will be a Muslim who has ninety-nine scrolls listing his evil deeds:

> *God will say, "Do you object to anything in this? Haw My scribes who keep note wronged you?"*
>
> *He will reply, No, my Lord."*
>
> *God will ask him if he has any excuse, and when he tells his Lord that he has none, He will say, 'On the contrary, you have with Us one good deed, and you will not be wronged today."*
>
> *A document will be brought out containing "I witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger." God will say, "Come to be weighed."*
>
> *The man will ask his Lord what this document is that is being brought along with the scrolls, and He will reply, "You will not be wronged."*
>
> *The scrolls will then be put on one side of the scale, and the document on the other, and the scrolls will become light and the document heavy, for nothing can compare in weight with God's name.*

When the Qur'ān criticizes the followers of other religions, it is criticizing a perceived distortion of *tawḥīd*. In doing so, it has recourse to versions of Christian and Jewish teachings to which the followers of those religions do not necessarily subscribe.

To take a simple example, it is commonly said that the Qur'ān rejects the Christian concept of the Trinity. Inasmuch as the Trinity is understood as negating *tawḥīd*, this is true. But not all Christians think that the Trinity negates *tawḥīd*.

Quite the contrary, most formulations of the Trinitarian doctrine are careful to preserve God's unity. If "threeness" takes precedence over oneness, then the Qur'ānic criticisms apply. But among Christians, the exact nature of the relationship between the three and the one is a point of recurring debate. One of the actual Qur'ānic verses that are taken as negating the Trinity says, "Those who say, 'God is the third of three' have become truth-concealers" (5:73). Even an elementary knowledge of any Christian catechism tells us that God is not "the third of three." Rather, God is one and three at the same time. Inasmuch as he is three, he presents himself to his creatures as three persons— Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Another Qur'ānic verse says something similar, but now we have this first verse to help us understand what is being criticized:

> *The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So haw faith in God and His messengers, and do not say, 'Three." Refrain; better it is for you. God is only One God.* (4:171)

Notice that this passage gives Jesus an extremely exalted position and recognizes that he has qualities possessed by no other prophet.[2] However, it stresses once again that there is but a single God. If faith in Jesus leads to the affirmation of three gods, then the Qur'ān rejects that. But again, the actual Christian position is highly subtle, and few if any Christians would hold that they have faith in other than a single God.

Some Muslim commentators point out that there is nothing wrong in saying "three" so long as it does not mean that God is the *third of three*. If we say that God is the third of *two*, that is fine. The Qur'ān itself says as much:

> *Hast thou not seen that God knows whatsoever is in the heavens, and whatsoever is in the earth? Three men conspire not secretly together, but He is the fourth of them, neither five men, but He is the sixth of them, neither fewer than that, neither more than that, but He is with them, wherever they may*

be. Then He shall tell them what they haw done, on the Day of Resurrection. Surely God has knowledge of everything. (58:7)

Another Christian concept that the Qur'ān criticizes vehemently is that Jesus should be God's son. The verse just cited that negates "three" continues by saying, "Glory be to Him— that He should have a son!" (4:171). Elsewhere the Qur'ān says, "How should He have a son, seeing that He has no female companion, and He created all things, and He has knowledge of everything?" (6:102).

Qur'ānic usage and the general Muslim understanding make clear that by son, Muslims understand not a symbol or a metaphor, but a physical son, born of a mother, God's supposed female companion. It may be that some Christians have thought that God has taken a wife, or that he somehow impregnated the Virgin Mary, giving birth to his son. But no Christian theologian has ever imagined such a thing. For Christians, Jesus' sonship is a reality, but it cannot be taken in a physical sense. The fact that Mary is often called the Mother of God does not help clear up the matter for Muslims, who have only the Qur'ānic text and popular misconceptions of an alien religion to go by.

That the idea of sonship is understood by Muslims in a literal sense is obvious, for example, in the short text of Sura 112, often called *Tawḥīd*. Anyone who thinks about the implications of sonship and fatherhood will quickly understand that these are relative terms. Everyone who is a son is also (potentially at least) a father, and everyone who is a father is also a son, with the sole exception of Adam. Notice that in affirming *tawḥīd*, the Qur'ān not only negates the idea that Jesus could have been God's son, but also the necessary correlative, that God could have been someone else's son, surely the ultimate absurdity in Muslim eyes:

Say: He is God, One-God, the Everlasting Refuge. He did not give birth, nor was He given birth to, and He has no equal.

Another very commonly repeated Qur'ānic criticism of Jews and Christians is that they have corrupted their scriptures and therefore invalidated the messages brought to them by the prophets. The Qur'ānic text, however, offers a more ambiguous answer to the question of other scriptures than Muslims may admit. The key Arabic term is *tahrif*, which means to turn something from its proper way, to distort, to alter. Do the following Qur'ānic verses refer to the actual text of the scriptures, or do they refer to the interpretation of the scriptures? Qur'ān commentators take both positions, thus allowing Muslims various alternatives in their attempts to understand the significance of the passage (we translate *tahrif* as "alter"):

> *Some of the Jews altered words from their meanings, saying, 'We have heard and we disobey". . . . Had they but said, 'We hear and we obey,". . . it would have been better for them.* (4:46)

Notice that in this verse, the Qur'ān does not make a universal judgment, but rather criticizes some followers of the Jewish religion. If the point is interpretation, no one could take exception to this statement, since followers of every religion recognize that some of their co-religionists distort the meaning of scripture. Another verse is as follows:

> *So, because [the Jews] broke their compact, We cursed them and made their hearts hard, they alter words from their meanings, and they haw forgotten a portion of what they were reminded of.* (5:13)

Here, the Qur'ān connects the issue of textual distortion with guidance and misguidance. Those Jews who broke their covenant with God suffered hardening of their hearts as a divine punishment. Hardening of the heart is a term that the Qur'ān employs to refer to all the consequences of turning away from God. In general, it signifies a dulling of the intelligence and a weakening of the connection with the divine attributes of gentleness, mercy, and beauty. Those whose hearts became hardened fell into further distance from God and greater misguidance. Hence, they began to pervert the meaning of their own scriptures. The prophets had come to remind them, but they forgot some of what the prophets had told them. Their act of forgetting could possibly mean that some of the scripture was lost, but more likely it simply means that those with hardened hearts were unable to understand the meaning of the remembrance; that the divine message embodied in scripture.

In another verse on the same subject, the Qur'ān addresses the Prophet, telling him not to be so eager for the Jews in his environment to listen to his message:

> *Art thou then so eager that they should have faith in thee? But there was a group among them who listened to the Speech of God, then altered it knowingly, having understood it.* (2:75)

This verse suggests that accepting Islam is not sufficient, if old habits such as reading scripture to one's own advantage are maintained. But again, this verse refers to "a group of them," not to all Jews.

Some of the polemically minded Muslim theologians investigated the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament looking for evidence that Jews and Christians had distorted the text of their scriptures. The first to do this, and the one was the most thorough and systematic in his approach, was the Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). Given that the Islamic concept of scripture diverges from the Jewish and Christian idea in important respects, and given that the Jewish and Christian canons include a great variety of texts written at many different times and from many different perspectives, it is not surprising that the Muslim scholars found much to criticize. Moreover, these critics were often simply repeating what is found in polemical literature written by Jews and Christian sectarians, or by other, often pre-Islamic, critics of the Bible, who may have been Samaritans, Jewish-Christians, Karaites, Gnostics, Hellenistic philosophers, or Manicheans. Some historians of Islam have even suggested that the modem critical study of the Bible— which, of course, has been far more severe on the Bible than Muslims have— received many of its ideas through the intermediary of the Islamic polemical literature.[3]

The Qur'ān commonly refers to the messages given to messengers as 'books"; that is, scriptures. Hence, it refers to the followers of a messenger as "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*). In most of the thirty verses where the Qur'ān employs this expression, it seems to have in view the Christians and the Jews, the followers of the two religions with which the nascent Muslim community had contact. In two verses, it also mentions the "People of the Reminder" in the same meaning.

In many of the verses where the People of the Book are mentioned, the two sides of the Qur'ānic picture of pre-Islamic religion can easily be seen. Those who observe their scriptures are praiseworthy, while those who do not follow the messages that the prophets delivered to them are blameworthy:

> *Many of the People of the Book wish that they might restore you as truth-concealers, after your faith, because of the envy in their souls.*
>
> (2:109)
>
> *Some of the People of the Book are a wholesome nation. They recite God's signs in the watches of the night, prostrating themselves, having faith in God and the Last Day, bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour, and vying with one another in good deeds. They are among the wholesome. Whatever good they do, they will not be denied its reward.* (3:113-115)

The Qur'ān is especially critical of the enmity that Christians and Jews have toward each other. Since they accept the Book— *tawḥīd* and prophecy— they should not quarrel. The first verse cited is especially interesting, since it makes a general criticism of all those who would say that Judaism and Christianity have no foundation:

> *The Jews say, "The Christians stand on nothing." The Christians say, "The Jews stand on nothing." But they recite the Book. Even so, those who haw no knowledge say the like of what they say.* (2:113)
>
> *Say: "O People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but God, and that*

> *we associate no others with Him, and that some of us do not take others as lords, apart from God." And if they turn their backs, say: "Bear witness that we are muslims."*
> *People of the Book! Why do you dispute concerning Abraham? The Torah was not sent down, neither the Gospel, until after him. What, have you no intelligence?* (3:64-65)

There are many more verses of the Qur'ān that refer to Christianity and Judaism, but a thorough analysis would demand a major book. Enough has been said to provide the general picture.[4]

One more point, however, needs to be made in order to clarify a major difference in perspective between the Muslim and Christian view of things. For Christians, God's word is Christ, the "Word made flesh." The Gospels are inspired books written about Christ. The whole New Testament can take on the colour of God's word, but all this is secondary to Christ, who is the word incarnate. One can imagine a Christianity without the New Testament, sustained merely by an oral tradition. But one cannot imagine a Christianity without Christ.

For Muslims, God's Word is the Qur'ān, and Muhammad is simply the messenger. True, he is a perfect human being, God's vicegerent, and the model that God has designated for people to follow. But the message is the primary issue, not the messenger. One can imagine Islam without Muhammad, but not without the Qur'ān.

Muslims see other religions in terms of Islam, which in their eyes is the perfect religion. Of course, followers of other religions also look from their own perspective; this is not a quality unique to Muslims. Hence, Muslims expect other religions to have a book like the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān provides every reason for them to do so by referring to the Torah and the Gospel. But note that the Qur'ān mentions Gospel in the singular, not in the plural. It states repeatedly that Jesus, Gods messenger, was given the Gospel as his message, just as Muhammad was given the Qur'ān. Hence, Muslims are immediately suspicious when they hear that there are four Gospels. This difference of perspective on the role of the human and scriptural elements makes for endless misunderstandings between Christians and Muslims.

In order to sum up the Islamic view of other religions— Judaism and Christianity in particular— we can say the following: In reading the Qur'ān, many Muslims prefer to stress the passages that are critical of other religions and to ignore or explain away the verses that praise other religions. It cannot be denied that certain Qur'ānic verses provide a strong case for religious exclusivism. However, many Qur'ānic verses leave plenty of room for openness toward other religions. The position Muslims take on this issue depends largely on their own understanding of God's reality. Those who think that God's mercy really does take precedence over his wrath and embraces all those who try to follow his guidance find it easy to see God's guidance in all religions. In contrast, those who prefer to think of God as a stern and somewhat capricious master who issues orders and expects to be obeyed— no questions asked— are much more comfortable thinking that only they (their religious group, their political party) are among the saved.

Sometimes the best way to approach claims regarding exclusive possession of the truth is simply to laugh and to leave things in God's hands. Thus we conclude this section with an anecdote, told to us by one of the ulama many years ago.

Two Iranian scholars were discussing religion. One of them asked the other, "In the last analysis, who goes to paradise?" The other, a poet well known for his sense of humour, answered, "Well, it is really very simple. First, all religions other than Islam are obviously false, so we do not have to consider them. That leaves Islam. But among Muslims, some are Shi'ites and some Sunnis, and we all know that the Sunnis have strayed from the right path and will be thrown into hell. That leaves the Shi'ites. But among Shi'ites, there are the common people and the ulama. Everyone knows that the common people don't care about God and religion, so they will burn in the Fire. That leaves the ulama. But the ulama have become ulama in order to lord it over the common people. That leaves you and me. And I am not so sure about you."

Doesn't this kind of reasoning sound familiar? It is perhaps not wildly inaccurate to say that many of our contemporaries think this way, whether they be Muslims, Christians, Jews, scholars, scientists, politicians, or whatever. And this sort of position sounds suspiciously like that of Iblis, whose motto is, "I am better than he."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] This extract is from Dr. Chittick's illuminating study of the Islamic Tradition, *The Vision of Islam*, Paragon House, 1994, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000, pp. 164-175. (Ed.)

[2] See the readable and informative study by H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[3] Christians are often struck by this and other Qur'anic passages about Jesus, and some of the evangelically minded among them would like to find here an opening to convert Muslims to the right religion (i.e., their version of Christianity). The typical Muslim response, however, is a yawn. They cannot get excited about any human qualities when "There is nothing real but the Real." After all, they say, so what if Jesus was born of a virgin? That does not make him divine. Adam was created without father or mother, so that should place him a notch above Jesus. The Qur'an itself compares Jesus to Adam: "Surely the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness. He created him of dust, then said unto him Be! and he was" (3:59).

[4] Excellent recent studies on the Islamic understanding of Christianity include Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Neal Robinson, *Christ in Islam and Christianity* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991).

QUR'ĀNIC INCLUSIVISM IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

Joseph Lumbard

What first drew me to the teachings of the Qur'ān, and even persuaded me that they were the teachings by which I wish to live my own life, are the verses that clearly advocate an attitude of tolerance and acceptance toward people of other faiths. Verses such as:

> *Verily those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Sabeans and the Christians are those who believe in God and the last day and do righteous deeds, so they have their recompense with God. They shall not fear nor shall they sorrow* (2:62, 5:69),

rang true to my ear and seemed to transcend much of the religious bigotry to which human history bears witness in all too many forms. Other verses, such as, *and we have sent to every people a messenger, that they may worship God* (16:32); *and for every people there is a messenger* (10:48), seemed to speak of a universality of revelation and prophecy. I was somewhat surprised in later years to discover that the majority of Muslims have usually explained such verses in a manner that either dismisses them as abrogated (*mansūkh*) or employs complex philology to explain that the apparent, literal meaning is not the real meaning.

Despite a clear message of universality, tolerance and pluralism in the Qur'ān, the main line theological and hermeneutic traditions have almost always chosen to read the universal, inclusivist dimension of the Qur'ān, and of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad in light of more exclusivist verses such as, *Verily the religion with God is Islam* (5:3), and *Who seeks other than Islam as a religion, it will not be accepted from him* (3:85). These are trumpeted in many quarters as incontrovertible evidence that only those who follow the Prophet Muhammad shall be saved. As Imām Yaḥyā al-Nawawī (d. 1277) has written:

> Someone who does not believe that whoever follows another religion besides Islam in an unbeliever (like Christians), or doubts that such a person in an unbeliever, or considers their sect to be valid, is himself an unbeliever (*kāfir*) even if he manifests Islam and believes in it.[1]

Indeed, the weight of "tradition" is undoubtedly on the side of one who prefers an exclusivist reading of the Qur'ān. This has brought many Muslims, such as Farid Esack, Ali Asghar Engineer, Muhammad Arkoun and others to propose a radical break with the tradition in a favor of more pluralistic understanding of the Qur'ānic message. Such figures all too often maintain that the traditional methodologies for understanding the Qur'ān need to be abandoned in the name of a new hermeneutic that accounts for the nature of the times in which we live.

As Jane McAuliffe has demonstrated in *Qur'ānic Christians* and more recently Yohanan Friedmann in *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam*,[2] the majority of Muslim scholars throughout history have interpreted the exclusivist verses of the Qur'ān more literally than the inclusivist verses. Indeed, this is the common interpretation one finds on the street and in the Mosque, where verses such as: *Verily the religion with God is Islam* (5:3), and *Who seeks other than Islam as a religion, it will not be accepted from him* (3:85) are trumpeted as incontrovertible evidence that only those who follow the

Prophet Muhammad shall be saved. This is then supported by the oft-cited *hadith,*

> By Him in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, there is no Christian or Jew of this community who hears of me and then dies without believing in that with which I was sent but that he is among the companions of the fire.[3]

Nonetheless, many verses clearly indicate that the new revelation brought by Muhammad is but a continuation of previous ways:

> *Verily We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and the tribes and Jesus, Job, Jonas, Aaron, and Solomon, and We gave David the Psalms; and messengers regarding whom We have told you stories and messengers regarding whom We have not told you stories* (4:163-4);
>
> *God has laid down for you as religion that with which He charged Noah, and what we have revealed to thee, and that with which We charged Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: "Establish the religion, and scatter not regarding it."* (42:13);
>
> *And We never sent a messenger before thee save that We revealed to him, saying, "There is no God but I, so worship Me."* (21:25);

Some verses even imply that the content of all revealed messages is one and the same: *Nothing has been said to you save what was said to the messengers before you* (41:43). But one who wishes to substantiate the claim that all such verses allude to the validity of other faiths will often find himself thwarted by the exegetical tradition, which almost always opts for exclusivist interpretations of the Qur'ān, even when philology must be strained in order to substantiate such claims. One obvious example of straining philology is found on the interpretation of *And We have sent to every people a messenger, that they may worship God* (16:32), and 10:48: *And for every people there is a messenger. When their messenger comes, they are judged with equity and are not wronged.* At face value these affirm the validity of all religions prior to Islam. But rather than being read as affirmations of the universality of revelation, they are usually presented as declarations that the Prophet Muhammad is God's Messenger sent to all humankind in every land, such that all other religions are now abrogated. But were the reference to the Prophet Muhammad alone the proper Arabic would say "the Messenger" rather than "a messenger." Though this is a very subtle and even debatable philological point, other verses which make very literal inclusivist and even universalist statements are explained away, not only through philology, but through the trump card of "tradition"– *taqlīd*. Those who take such verses as confirming the validity of other religions must therefore, as Jane McAuliffe puts it, "be compelled by the exegetical tradition to acknowledge that they are creating new interpretive strategies."[4]

The universalist verses of the Qur'ān are either explained away through creative and clever philology or are claimed to have been abrogated by later revelations. Rarely are they allowed to stand alone as the unencumbered word of God. In response to this, some Muslim authors have attempted to address this question anew in recent years, privileging the "pluralistic" and universalist dimension of the Qur'ān, while explaining away or even dismissing the more exclusivist verses. While such an effort gives hope for a more tolerant mode of Islamic theology and Qur'ānic exegesis, works such as Farid Esack's *Qur'ān Liberation and Pluralism* have demonstrated such blatant disregard for traditional Islamic scholarship that they have no hope of any influence beyond a select group of Western and Westernized Muslims. The fact is that we have yet to find a way to emphasize the universalist element of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's message without estranging the majority of Muslims and breaking completely from tradition.

In this paper, I propose that there is a way in which a universalist and pluralistic understanding of the Qur'ānic message can be attained through a methodology that remains true to the basic principles or roots (*uṣūl*) of Islamic scholarship and even to the methodologies, but differs in the branches (*furūʿ*) and fruits that are nourished and sustained through those roots. This will not necessarily be a new reading, as many (mostly Sufis) have alluded to it throughout Islamic history. But in an age of globalization when everything overlaps and interpenetrates we have reached a point that it needs to be part of mainstream Islam.

To substantiate such a procedure within the context of traditional Islamic scholarship, one can call upon a famous saying of the tradition: "The divergence of the scholars is a mercy." As Frithjof Schuon remarks in commenting upon this saying:

> ... if 'the divergences of theologians are a blessing' as Moslems say, this means that the total doctrine, contained more or less synthetically in the Revelation, is rendered explicit only by 'fragments' which are outwardly divergent, although fundamentally concordant.[5]

The outward divergence of such doctrines is what lies in the branches. Here the tree of tradition can be seen as one whose various branches produce different kinds of fruit. The fundamental concordance is the fact that they all derive from the same roots. This is to say that within Islam "orthodoxy" is not so much a body of conclusions as it is a methodology and more importantly sincere engagement with the Qur'ān and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad– and of the teachings of the Imams for Shīʿite Muslims.

In failing to observe this when we seek to emphasize the pluralist and inclusive message of the Qur'ān, we risk a fall into an iconoclastic confrontation with tradition, rather than a methodical accounting and development of its teachings. This will benefit no one, for the new conclusions attained, however true they may be, will have no soil in which to take root. As Frithjof Schuon has written:

Dogmatic form is transcended by fathoming its depths and contemplating its universal content, and not by denying it in the name of a pretentious and iconoclastic ideal of 'pure truth'.[6]

Now, from a Qur'ānic perspective, *We have sent no messenger save with the tongue of his people* (14:4). Read literally, this has important implications for how we read and understand the Qur'ān. Over time Muslims have come to read the Qur'ān not necessarily in the language in which it was revealed, but by applying institutionalized definitions that are far from the literal meaning many of the Arabic words had in the time of the Prophet himself. These institutional definitions often become of greater concern than the literal meaning of the words themselves, leading to what Walid Saleh has referred to as the conflict between tradition and philology in the exegetical tradition. If we do not always keep the philology in mind and look to the meaning of the Arabic words in the historical context in which they were used, we quickly become victims of our own cultural and denominational limitations. Here tradition becomes *taqlīd* rather than *sunna*.

This phenomena is very clear in the most widespread interpretation of the last two lines of *Surat al-Fātiḥa*: *Lead us on the straight path; the path of those whom You have blessed, unlike those upon whom is Your anger, nor those who are astray* (1:6-7). As *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* maintains, the Muslims are those on the straight path, the Christians are those who are astray and the Jews are the ones subject to God's anger. From this perspective, Judaism and Christianity are intermediary stages on the way to Islam at best. But uncritical allegiance to corrupted beliefs and practices prevents Jews and Christians from embracing the fullness of revelation that is the Qur'ān.

The most straightforward example of tradition trumping philology is the interpretation of the word "*islām*." Today, as for the past 1200 years or more, the word "*islām*" is taken to indicate a particular set of beliefs and practices adhered to by a certain segment of humanity. But when the Qur'ān was first revealed what did this word mean? As Toshiko Izutsu has demonstrated in his masterful books *God and Man in the Koran* and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, the original meaning of this word in pre-Islamic poetry is not only "to submit," but moreover to give over something that is particularly precious to oneself and which it is painful to abandon, to somebody who demands it.[7] So when the Prophet Muhammad first presented a "message" that claimed to be "*islām*," the words would have been understood far differently than what we understand today. Moreover, the way this word is used in the Qur'ān actually provides the raw material for a very eloquent understanding of religious pluralism, one wherein all revelations throughout history are seen as different ways of giving to God that which is most difficult to give—our very selves.

To illustrate this, I will mention several of the Qur'ānic verses regarding Islam which can be taken to present every previous revelation as a way of submitting—*islām*, rather than the historical religion of Islam. Such verses present *islām* as a way of life, not a particular creed. The first to declare himself a Muslim in the Qur'ān is the Prophet Noah: *I was commanded to be among the submitters (Muslims)* (10:72). Regarding Abraham, the forefather of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the Qur'ān states, *Abraham was not a Jew or a Christian, rather he was a pious follower, a submitter (Muslim)* (3:67). According to the Qur'ān, *His Lord said to him (Abraham), "Submit!" He said, "I submit to the Lord of the worlds"* (2:131). After Abraham and his son Ishmael erected the Ka'aba they prayed, *Our Lord, make us submitters unto You and make our offspring a nation submitting unto You. Show us our religious rites and turn unto us . . .* (2:128). A few verses later, it is said that both Abraham and Jacob advised their sons, *O my sons, God has chosen the way for you. So do not die but that you are submitters* (2:132). From this perspective, every prophet of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition has taught a different mode of submission to God. The creeds, laws and languages differ, but the essential message is the same. Thus the Qur'ān tells us of Jews and Christians:

> *And when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they say, "We believe in it. Truly it is the truth from our Lord. Truly before it [was revealed] we were submitters* (28:52).

The Apostles also implored Jesus, *We are the helpers of God! We believe! Bear witness that we are submitters* (3:52). Confirming the inner substance of these various forms of submission, the Prophet Muhammad has said: "The Prophets are half-brothers, their mothers differ and their way (*din*) is one."[8]

At face value such verses very clearly state that *islām* is a universal and perennial way of life practiced by the great founders of all previous religions/ways (*dins*) and their followers. But once "*islām*" becomes Islam, an institutional definition or conception is formed and such verses become more problematic. Rather than resorting to philology to clarify the institutional interpretation of these verses, the majority of Muslim exegetes have provided historical explanations, telling us that those who say *Truly before it [was revealed] we were submitters* are in fact those Christians and Jews who had read the verses in their scriptures that spoke of the coming of Muhammad and thus believed in him. But the exegetes are not able to provide textual substantiations from the Bible for such assertions. Perhaps this is because, as the Qur'ān itself states, previous revelations have been "altered." But this leaves us wondering how these exegetes knew this to be true. Unfortunately, the logic is quite circular: the Qur'ān tells us that they are Muslims, Muslims are the people who follow the message of the Prophet Muhammad, therefore, they believed in the Prophet Muhammad. In other words, the institutionalized meaning of "*islām*" has trumped the linguistic meaning.

Examples of such exegetical slight of hand abound, and often involve far more subtle maneuvering to achieve the desired end– or to make the Qur'ān conform to "tradition." But to examine them in detail would require an extensive study. As with the interpretation of the word *islām* one often finds that a reading of the Qur'ān that accounts for its most literal meaning yields meanings that are in conflict with the traditional Muslim understanding of other religions.

Perhaps the Qur'ān itself warns that this will some day occur. For a passage that is often read as a condemnation of Judaism and Christianity by Muslims is actually a condemnation of religious condemnation:

> *They say, "None will enter the garden but those who were Jews and Christians." These are their desires (amani). Say, "Bring your proof if your are veracious." Rather one who submits his face to God and does what is beautiful, he has his reward with God. No fear is upon them and they shall not sorrow. The Jews claim the Christians are based upon nothing, and the Christians claim the Jews are based upon nothing, yet they recite the book.* ***Likewise, those who do not know, claim the like of their claim.*** *Then God judges between you on the Day of Judgment regarding that wherein you differed.*
>
> (2:111-113, Emphasis added)

In this vein, it may be wiser to read Qur'ānic condemnations of people of other faiths, not as condemnations of their faiths as such, but as a condemnation of hardness of heart that causes people to read the Qur'ān in accord with their own desires. We must be aware that those who follow the Prophet Muhammad are also susceptible to forgetting *a portion of what they were reminded of* (5:13). Indeed, that Muslims would fail to follow the fundamental precepts of the Qur'ān was foreseen by the Prophet Muhammad. Many a *ḥadīth* tell us that Muslims will follow their religious predecessors, by selling God's verses for a small price and believing in some of the book and disbelieving in some of it. On one occasion, a companion asked him how knowledge could vanish when Muslims will continue to teach the Qur'ān generation after generation. The Prophet replied, "May your mother weep for you! Do you not see these Jews and these Christians? They read the Torah and the Gospels and do not act in accord with them."[9] Another famous *Ḥadīth* states:

> There will soon come upon the people a time in which nothing of the Qur'ān remains save its trace and nothing of Islam remains save its name; their mosques will be full, though they are devoid of guidance. Their scholars are the worst people under the sky, from them strife emerges and spreads.[10]

A well-known Qur'ānic verse contends that the multiple means by which human beings worship God is part of the test that they confront in this world:

> *And for each we have made among them a law and a creed; and if God wanted He would have made you a single community, but to try you regarding what has come to you, so vie in good deeds; to God is your return all of you, so we inform of that wherein you differed.* (5:48).

This reveals that there are different ways of understanding God and the relationship with God for different human collectivities. God has not revealed one law, but many laws. To each law corresponds a particular creed. Other passages confirm this by revealing that God has also revealed different rites of worship for different human collectivities:

> *For every community (umma) We have made a rite that they practice with devotion. So let them not contend with you in this matter. And call to your Lord; truly you are upon a straight guidance. And if they dispute you, then say, "God knows best what you do. God judges between you on the day of resurrection regarding that wherein you differ."* (22:67-69)

The reason for these differences in creed and practice is revealed in the following verse:

> *O Mankind! We have created you of a male and a female,* ***and have made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another;*** *surely the most honorable of you with God is the most reverent; surely God is Knowing, Aware.* (49:13, Emphasis added)

From this perspective, what is most important is not whether or not one follows a particular creed or practice, but that one is reverent toward God in adhering to one of the particular modes of submission that God has revealed. In this light, the revelations of many different religions could be seen as a test– the test alluded to in 5:48. The changing face of our world has put Muslims in a position where they must ask themselves anew whether or not they have passed that test.

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[1] Imām Yaḥyā al-Nawawī, *Rawḍa al-ṭālibīn wa 'umda al-muftīn* (Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islami, 1412/1991), vol. 10, p. 70. The translation and citation is taken from Nuh Ha Mim Keller, "On the validity of all religions in the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī and Emir 'Abd al-Qādir, a letter to 'Abd al-Matīn" at www.masud.co.uk

[2] Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relation sin the Muslim Tradition*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[3] Sahih Muslim, *Kitab al-Iman*, 72.

[4] Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 290.

[5] Frithjof Schuon, *Stations of Wisdom* (Bloomington, IN, World Wisdom Books, 1995), repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004,p, 4.

[6] *Stations of Wisdom*, p. 4.

[7] Toshiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran* (Salem, NC, Ayer Publishing Co., 1987), p. 199. For an extensive treatment of the over semantic field of the word *islām* see Chapter 8 "Jahiliyyah and Islam."

[8] Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Anbiyā'*, 48, Ibn Māja, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, 26.

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[9] Sunan Ibn Māja, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, 26.

[10] Al-Bayhaqī, *Sha'b al-imān* (Beirut, Dar al-kutub al-'ilmi, 1410/1990), vol. 2, p. 311.

ILLUMINATION AND NON-DELIMITATION

LESSONS FOR INTER AND INTRA FAITH DIALOGUE FROM THE WISDOM OF THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

Reza Shah Kazmi

The starting point for the reflections presented in this paper is the monastery of St Catherine at Sinai. This monastery has the distinction of being the oldest continually inhabited monastic establishment in Christendom. It not only exists as a witness to the continuing dynamism of the contemplative ideal in our days in the sister faith/wisdom tradition of Christianity but also offers a concrete evidence of the inter-religious co-existence— indeed harmony— that has permitted it to remain unmolested in its overwhelmingly Muslim environment for close to fourteen centuries.

Two vivid symbols of this harmony are to be found within the walls of the monastery: the first is a mosque, built by the monks for the Bedouins; and the second is the famous charter of protection granted by the Prophet to the monastery. The monks themselves are convinced that this charter, sealed with an imprint of the Prophet's own hand, was instrumental in maintaining the safety and security of the monastery. The original document was written in Kufic script by Sayyidina 'Alī, and taken by the Ottoman Sultan Selim back to Istanbul in the

16th century. The Ottoman copy of the original is on display at the monastery.

It is indeed a precious and remarkable document. Historians are somewhat divided over its authenticity, some claiming that it was in fact composed by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim (ruled 996-1021). For our part, we agree with the opinion of the Greek historian, Amantos, who writes, "The monastery of Sinai could not possibly have survived without the protection afforded by Mohammed and his successors ... Moreover, the great number of decrees which the Mohammedan [sic.] rulers of Egypt issued confirming the protected status of the monastery must have resulted from the fact that Mohammed himself had granted protection to Sinai."[1]

The document itself goes beyond merely granting formal protection. It states that wherever monks or hermits are to be found, on any mountain, hill, village, or other habitable place, on the sea or in the deserts or in any convent, church or house of prayer, I shall be watching over them as their protector, with all my soul, together with all my *ummah*; because they [the monks and hermits] are a part of my own people, and part of those protected by me.'

It goes on to state their exemption from taxes and warns of stern retribution if the injunctions of the charter are broken by Muslims. Also, most significantly, it makes it incumbent on the Muslims not only to protect the monks, but also, in regard to Christians generally, to 'consolidate their worship at Church'.

This points to the deeper significance of the document, and can be seen as a direct expression of the Qur'anic verse which is also cited in the charter: *Discourse not with them* [the people of the Book] *except in that which is finest*[2]— this last word translating *aḥsān,* that which is most excellent, indeed, most 'beautiful', taking into account the root of the word, *ḥasuna,* to be beautiful.

All of us are no doubt aware that the legal protection of the People of the Book is enshrined in the Islamic revelation itself, and it is based on the unity of the Abrahamic message. This unity of essence transcends the differences between the faith-communities making up the Abrahamic family. But the question to be posed here is this: how much diversity can this family tolerate before it begins to disintegrate? One resoundingly positive answer to this question takes its inspiration from the Prophet's Charter to St Catherine's monastery. For this charter can be read as an eloquent symbol of the Muslim respect for, not only the religion of Christianity in general, but the monastic ideal in particular. In other words, it can be seen, literally, as a 'seal' of approval of a way of life that appears on the surface to be at the very antipodes of the Islamic ideal.

A superficial response to the Prophet's Charter, based on a conventional Muslim attitude towards monasticism, would be as follows: even if it is an authentic document, the letter proves nothing other than the fact that, since monks are generally harmless, they should be left in peace. In other words, they should be protected, yes, but only on account of a legal principle, and despite the dogmatic errors on which their way of life is founded.

My contention, on the contrary, is that the legal principle of protection is itself the expression of the fundamental unity of the Abrahamic faiths, an inward unity of spirit which is directly connected to 'that which is finest', that which is *aḥsān,* and which takes precedence over the differences between the faiths on the level of external forms. This position, we believe, helps us to resolve, in a fruitful and reflective manner, the paradox generated by the Charter.

The paradox is this: monasticism is clearly referred to in the Qur'an as an 'innovation'; and yet the Prophet's words— not to mention the tradition of protection characterizing Muslim relations with monks throughout history— imply a recognition of the validity of the monastic ideal. Furthermore, it is in the monastic Way that one finds Christianity at its most exalted and concentrated— the monks raise to its highest pitch of intensity all that makes Christianity what it is, including the very dogmas criticized in the Qur'an.

The paradox is sharpened further when we consider the principle, no monasticism in Islam' (*la rahbāniyya fi'l-Islam*), and the Sunnah of the Prophet in which marriage is so highly stressed, being referred to in fact as 'half of the religion'. The ideal of *tawḥīd,* of integrating oneness, dictates that the whole of life— not just religious devotion— is to be placed at the service of God. Contemplation and action are seen as complementary, not contradictory, for the Muslim; isolating oneself from the world for the sake of contemplation is, from this point of view, unfaithful to the integral human vocation.

The contrast between the Muslim and the monastic ideal is clear. But this contrast on the surface should not blind us to certain underlying, and largely unsuspected, affinities between the two ideals. One can argue:

1) that these affinities help to account for the extraordinary respect and solicitude manifested to the monks by the Prophet of Islam;

2) that these affinities are most markedly expressed in one key dimension of the Prophet's Sunnah, on the one hand, and the mystical fruits of the monastic path on the other;

3) that, probed with sufficient depth, these affinities reveal the power of sincere devotion to transcend the plane of dogmatic differences; and finally

4) that the realities revealed through devotion, contemplation, and pure prayer, not only relativise dogmatic differences as between different faiths but also, and with all the more reason, they relativise differences of doctrine and practices within one and the same faith: to put it bluntly, if the Prophet could go so far in respecting and protecting the monks of Christendom, is it not absurd that we, as Muslims sharing the same faith, seem unable to tolerate and respect each other's differences? The lesson for intra-faith dialogue is clear: we ought to be able to focus upon what is most excellent' in the position, the beliefs, the attitudes and the cultures of the internal Other, our fellow Muslims.

I strongly believe that one of the best ways of increasing tolerance of diversity within Islam is to deepen our understanding, and our practice, of the spiritual substance of the faith; careful consideration of the affinities between the Sunnah of the Prophet and the monastic ideal helps us to orient our attention to this spirit that transcends the plane of dogma, and which also gives inner life to the dogmas that can only partially express the Real.

What, then, are these affinities? First, let us hear what the Qur'an says about the monks: *You will find the nearest of them* [the People of the Book] *in love to those who believe to be those who say: Verily, we are Christians. That is because there are among them priests and monks, and they are not proud.*[3]

Humility is given as a key characteristic of the monks here, this accounting for one of the reasons why the Christians will be the 'nearest' of the People of the Book to the Muslims. However, we need to probe the deeper aspects of this nearness, for it goes beyond mere friendship or sentiment. The following verse, from the Surah Āl 'Imrān, leads us to these deeper aspects:

> They are not all alike. Among the People of Book is an upright community, who recite the verses of God in the watches of the night, and who prostrate [to Him] ; they believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and hasten unto good works; they are among the righteous. (Surah Āl 'Imrān, III: 13)

One can justifiably regard the monks and nuns as being among those referred to in this verse. Now the very intensity of their devotion, entailing long night vigils, mirrors one crucial aspect of the Prophetic Sunnah, so little stressed in our days. We know that the Prophet and his close companions also spent long periods of the night in prayer, as the following verse, from the Surah al-Muzzammil tells us:

> Truly your Lord knows that you stand in prayer close to two-

thirds of the night, and half of it, and a third of it– you and a group (*ṭā'ifa*) of those with you... (LXXIII: 20)

One thus sees something of the monastic way very much present in the Sunnah of the Prophet. We also know from strongly authenticated hadiths, that the Prophet would spend hours at a stretch reciting such long Surahs as the Surah al-Baqara and the Surah Āl 'Imrān, bowing and prostrating frequently, making supplications in accordance with the verses recited.[4] One might also mention here the Prophet's *zuhd,* his abstemiousness, his regular fasts apart from Ramadan, and the fact that, when he did eat, he never filled his stomach with food. Such details of the Prophet's life help us to see something of the discipline that we associate with the monastic way. However, what distinguishes the Prophetic norm is that this intense contemplative discipline was accomplished in the very midst of an active marital, social, and political life.

In this light we can better appreciate the principle of 'no monasticism in Islam': in the words of Frithjof Schuon, "it really means not that contemplatives must not withdraw from the world, but that the world must not be withdrawn from contemplatives"[5]— in other words, the world must not be deprived of the graces that flow through the presence of contemplatives within it. For the aim of Islam is to penetrate the whole of life with spirituality, not that spirituality is to be excluded from everyday life.

We can take another step closer to understanding the 'nearness' of the Christian monastic way to the Muslim contemplative ideal by looking carefully at another central aspect of the Sunnah: the remembrance of God, *dhikru 'Llāh.*

One must always remember, in any discussion of *dhikr,* that it means both a principle of awareness, of recollectedness, of consciousness of God, and also the means to achieve that awareness, namely the invocation of the Name or Names of God, the meditative practice *par excellence* of the contemplative tradition of Islam. If prayer constitutes the core of religious practice, the *dhikru 'Llāh* is, as the Qur'an puts it very simply, *akbar,* that is, *greater* or *greatest:*[6] *Truly prayer keeps* [one] *away from lewdness and iniquity, and the remembrance of God is greater.* (Surah al-ʻAnkabūt, XXIX: 45)[7]

Numerous sayings of the Prophet attest to the pre-eminence of the *dhikr.* For example, it is related that the Prophet asked his companions: 'Shall I not tell you about the best and purest of your works for your Lord, and the most exalted of them in your ranks, and the work that is better for you than giving silver and gold, and better for you than encountering your enemy, with you striking their necks and them striking your necks?' Thereupon the people addressed by him said: 'What is that; O Emissary of God?' He said, The perpetual invocation of God— exalted and glorious *(dhikru 'Llah ʻazza wa jalla dā'iman).*[8]

And again: upon being asked 'Which act is most meritorious?' the Prophet replied: [It is] that you die while your tongue is moistened with the *dhikru 'Llāh...'*[9] Likewise, the fourth Caliph Sayyidina ʻAlī affirms: 'Perpetuate the *dhikr, for* truly it illumines the heart, and it is the most excellent form of worship *(huwa afḍal al-ʻibāda).*[10]

There are many verses of the Qur'an that should be carefully noted in connection with the *dhikr.* Let us restrict ourselves, however, to the following.

> Those who believe and whose hearts are at peace in the remembrance of God; is it not in the remembrance of God that hearts are at peace? (Surah al-Raʻd, XIII: 28) Those are true believers whose hearts quake with awe when God is invoked (Surah al-Anfāl, VIII: 2) And invoke the Name of your Lord morning and evening. (Surah al-Insān, LXXVI: 25) And invoke the Name of your Lord, devoting yourself to it with utter devotion. (Surah al-Muzzammil, LXXIII: 8) O ye who believe! Invoke God with much invocation. (al-Aḥzāb, XXXIII: 42) Truly in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation between night and day are signs for those of substance, those who remember God

> standing, sitting, and reclining on their sides and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth... (Āl ʿImrān, III: 190-191) And invoke your Lord within yourself, in humility and awe, and beneath your breath, in the morning and in the night. (al-Aʿrāf, VII: 205)

The *dhikr is* presented here as the quintessence of all religious activity, or as the spiritual act *par excellence.* For the universality of its modes— standing, sitting, reclining, 'in yourself' 'with humility', 'with awe', 'in secret', 'under one's breath', according to the verses cited above— transcend the formal rules pertaining to the fixed canonical prayers, which involve particular words, movements, conditions, and times: the *dhikr,* by contrast is described as something to be performed at all times, in all places, in all postures; it is thus to be woven into the texture of everyday life, rather than super-imposed upon life as an extraneous, formalistic practice.

One of the names of the Prophet is indeed *dhikru 'Llāh,* (remembrance of God) and the whole of his life, in all its manifold diversity can be summed up in this phrase: never for a moment was he distracted from God, he was always immersed in consciousness of reality. Now, turning to the monks, we will find that such a perspective on prayer resonates deeply with the chief, distinguishing feature of the monastic contemplative path, particularly as regards the Eastern Orthodox Church, to which the monks of St Catherine's have always belonged. The 'prayer of the Heart', the 'Jesus Prayer', which is the continuous repetition of a formula containing the Name of Jesus— was and still is the essence of what is known as the Hesychastic Way, from *hesychia,* meaning 'silence and stillness'. This refers to a state of receptivity to nothing but the divine Presence. Listen to this description of the remembrance of God given by one of the earliest masters of Hesychasm, St. Diadochos of Photiki, who lived in the fifth century:

"Those who desire to free themselves from their corruption ought to pray not merely from time to time, but at all times...... a man who merely practices the remembrance of God from time to time loses through lack of continuity what he hopes to gain through his prayer. It is a mark of one who truly loves holiness that he continuously burns up what is worldly in his heart through practising the remembrance of God, so that, little by little, evil is consumed in the fire of this remembrance..."[11]

Not only can this passage be read as a commentary on the Qur'anic words, *and the remembrance of God is greater,* but also on the verse which tells us about men who are not distracted by trade and business from the remembrance of God.[12]

At this point we can anticipate the following objection: the God which is believed in, remembered and invoked by the Christian contemplatives is not identical to Allah, for they believe in a Trinitarian God. Now there are two responses we can make. The first is to cite the verse of the Qur'an which tells the Muslims to say to the People of the Book explicitly: *Our God and your God is one, and unto Him we surrender.*[13]

Other theological arguments could be made here, but let us move to the second response, which leads us to a more profound understanding of what this verse can mean in metaphysical terms. This involves studying carefully the doctrinal framework within which the remembrance of God was and is accomplished by the Christian monks.

To be as brief as possible, this is described as mystical theology, or as apophatic, that is, negative, theology, associated chiefly with the towering figure of St Dionysius the Areopagite.[14] This figure, whose life is shrouded in mystery, probably lived in the fifth century. He adopted the persona of St Paul's Athenian convert mentioned in Acts, 17: 34; and wrote under this pseudonym treatises that remain foundational for Christian mysticism.

So what is the nature of this 'God' in whom the Christian mystical theologians believe? According to Dionysius, and all the great authorities in the Hesychastic tradition, God is absolutely indescribable. He is the inscrutable One, writes

Dionysius, 'out of reach of every rational process. Nor can any words come up to the inexpressible Good, this One, this unity unifying every unity.' This sounds very much like *tawḥīd,* does it not?

Dionysius continues: When...we give the name of "God" to that transcendent hiddenness, when we call it "life" or "being" or "light" or "Word", what our minds lay hold of is nothing other than certain activities apparent to us...'[15] Does this not remind us of the Qur'anic refrain: *glorified be God above what they describe?*

Going forward in time, but coming closer in space to St. Catherine's, listen to St Gregory of Sinai, of the 14th century: "stillness means the shedding of all thoughts for a time, even those which are Divine and engendered by the Spirit ..."[16]

The state of Hesychia, then, is receptive only to That which transcends all thoughts, and therefore all dogmas— it is an opening to the divine Reality as it is in itself, not such as it is defined by dogmatic thought. It is in this contemplation of the supreme Reality– which is absolutely One— that the Christian theological tenet of the oneness of God finds its most compelling consummation. St. Gregory of Palamas, another central figure in the tradition of Hesychasm, puts this oneness of God in the following terms:[17]

> 'We worship one true and perfect God in three true and perfect Persons— not a threefold God— far from it— but a simple God.'[18] We should remember here that simple means non-compound, absolutely itself with no admixture or multiplicity.

Again, let us anticipate the obvious objection: this conception of the oneness of God is compromised by the mention of three Persons. My response is this: what is more important for us, as Muslims, when we evaluate this Christian conception of God— is it the oneness, the ultimate Reality that transcends all dogmas, or is it the fact that, on the level of dogma, a Trinitarian conception comes into the picture? We contend that we would be true both to the Qur'an and the Sunnah if we focus on what is *aḥsan,* finest, most excellent, in the Christian conception of the Real, and thus allow their own stress on the transcendent oneness of God to take priority, for us, over the Trinitarian aspect of their belief.

Furthermore, our ability to focus on this transcendent aspect of their belief will be deepened in the very measure that we are sensitive to the spiritual substance of our own faith; and it will be strengthened also by our awareness of the fact that the reality of God transcends all dogmas, our own included; and this position will be made more existential and less theoretical insofar as we intensify our commitment to that reality through the actual practice of prayer, devotion and contemplation.

This point of view helps us to resolve the paradox of the Qur'anic position on the People of the Book: on the one hand, many verses criticize their dogmatic errors; and on the other, there are clear verses indicating that they are nonetheless saved on account of their faith and virtue. There is also an incident in the Prophet's life which helps us to resolve this paradox; it is an eloquent expression of the principle we have been trying to stress: sincere devotion to the supreme Reality transcends the plane of dogmatic differences.

A delegation of Christians came from Najran in Yemen to engage the Prophet in theological debate, largely over the nature of Christ. What matters from our point of view is not so much the fact that the debate was cut short by the Prophet's challenge to engage in a *mubāhala,* a curse on those who were wrong— a challenge the Christians did not take up; nor does its spiritual significance reside only in the fact that the Prophet offered the Christians protection, in return for tribute. For me, the deepest significance of this episode lies in the fact that, when the Bishop wished to perform the liturgy for the delegation, the Prophet allowed him to do so in his own mosque.

Now the Prophet was fully aware of what the liturgy entailed, in its essentials, and that the formulae used would of course centre on Christ as the Son of God. The Bishop would thus be reciting the very words that are so severely censured in the Qur'an; and yet the Prophet allowed him to do so in his own sacred place of worship. Was this just a question of good *adab* on the Prophet's part? Or can we see this act of spiritual etiquette arising, rather, out of the Prophet's recognition of the principle we are stressing here: just as the divine reality transcends all dogma, likewise, sincere devotion to that reality transcends the dogmatic framework within which it is accomplished.

Let us return to the words of the Qur'an cited by the Prophet in the Charter: *Discourse not with them except in that which is finest.* We have seen in the Prophet's actions towards the monks, in particular, a clear expression of what this finest' element is: all that is most noble, most elevated, most sincere. This mode of discourse does not mean a refusal to differ: it means to differ with dignity and respect. It means a refusal to allow any differences to eclipse or undermine what is most noble in the neighbour, in the "Other"; what is most essential in his or her belief. It means a refusal to allow one's attitude to the "Other"— whether within or outside one's religion— to be determined by extrinsic and relative factors. It means, on the contrary, an affirmation of all that is best in the "Other", and to make this the basis of one's fundamental disposition towards the "Other".

In this way, one induces the "Other" to likewise see what is best in one's own position: a reciprocal recognition, a mutual respect can thus be envisaged and cultivated between two or more partners in dialogue.

This reciprocal recognition is finely expressed in the relationship between the monks and the Prophet, and it is enshrined in symbolic as well as literal terms, For we have not only the covenant of St. Catherine's, and other letters of recognition and protection granted by the Prophet, but also the following remarkable facts of sacred history, centred on the monks associated with the city of Bostra in Syria who recognised the Prophet prior to the onset of his mission.

First we have the monk Bahira, who invited the Meccan traders passing through Bostra to a feast, and recognised the signs of the awaited prophet in the young Muhammad who was with his uncle, Abū Tālib.[19] These signs, described in prophecies handed down from generation to generation, were most likely the basis on which, decades later, the monk Nestor, also in Bostra— perhaps in the very same cell of Baḥīra— told Maysara that he was travelling with the long-awaited Prophet.[20] And finally, again in Bostra, we hear of an unnamed monk telling Talḥa that the Prophet had come, and named him.[21] The mystery of these coincidences is deepened when we remember that Āmina, the Prophet's mother, claimed that she was aware of a light within her when she was pregnant, a light which shone with such intensity that she claimed she could see the castles of Bostra.[22]

Can we see here a luminous anticipation of the mutual recognition between the Prophet and the monks— each recognising the light of God in the other? This provides us with a wonderful theme for meditation, with which we can draw these remarks to a close. The light of the Prophet shines from the womb, the *raḥīm.* This takes us directly to *raḥma* (mercy), the compassion proper to true wisdom: *We sent you not,* God says to the Prophet, *except as a raḥma* (mercy) *to all creation* (Surah al-Anbiyā', XXI: 107). This compassionate wisdom does not negate but affirm, not abrogate but illuminate, the truth and sanctity present in all religions, which are all revelations of one and the same God. It is thus that the Prophet is described, together with the believers, as believing in "God, His Angels, His Books and His Messengers": *la nufarriqu bayna aḥadin min rusulihī— We make no distinction between any of His Messengers.*[23] In the luminous and compassionate wisdom of the Prophet, then, there is both illumination and illimitation or Non-Delimitation: bounded by no dogmatic restrictions, it brings truth to light wherever it is to be found. It is thus 'light upon light', *nūrun 'alā nūr.*

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Cited by Athanasios Paliouras, *St Catherine's Monastery* (Sinai: Hiera Mani Sina, E. Tzaferi, 1985), p. 16. Kurt Weizmann points out that the Muslim protection of the monastery is one among many examples of the tradition of tolerance manifested by Muslims towards minority faiths in their midst. See his essay, "The History" in J. Galey, *Sinai and the Monastery of St Catherine* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1979), p. 13.

[2] Surah al-ʿAnkabūt, XXIX: 46. Cf: Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and hold discourse with them in the finest manner ... (Surah al-Nakhl, XVI: 125)

[3] Surah al-Māʾida, V: 82

[4] See Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's *Muhammad, Messenger of God (al-Shifa),* Tr. Aisha Bewley, (Inverness: Madinah Press, 1991), pp. 74-75

[5] This is from the remarkable essay by Schuon, "The Universality of Monasticism and its Relevance in the Modern World", in his *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (London: Perennial Books, 1965; reprint, Suhail Academy 2004), p. 122.

[6] The Arabic comparative is at the same time the superlative, so the word *akbar* can be translated in either way.

[7] All translations from the Qur'an are based on those of Pickthall and Arberry.

[8] Cited in *Al-Ghazali--Invocations and Supplications,* (Book IX of The Revival of the Religious Sciences) Trans. K. Nakamura (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1990), p. 8 (we have slightly modified the translation of the last sentence of the hadith.) This hadith is found in the collection of Ibn Maja *(Sunan,* Adab, 53) and in that of Ibn Hanbal *(Musnad,* VI. 447). See the Arabic text for this and several other hadith of similar import in al-Ghazali's *Ihya' ʿulum al-din* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 391-2.

[9] Ibid. p. 7. The hadith is given in Tabarani's *al-Muʿjam al-kabir, XX.* 107. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa durar al-kilam* (Qom: Imam-e ʿAsr, 2001) p.177, no.2537

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[10] *Ghurar al-Hikam wa durar al-kilam* (Qom: Imam-e 'Asr, 2001) p. 177, no. 2537.

[11] *The Philokalia,* vol. 1

[12] Surah al-Nur, XXIV: 36-37.

[13] Surah al-'Ankabut, XXIX:.46

[14] The scholar Bernard McGinn describes him as the fountainhead of mystical speculative systems for at least one thousand years.' *The Foundations of Mysticism* (London: SCM Press, 1992), vol. 1, p. 158.

[15] 'Cited by Vincent Rossi, Presence, Participation, Performance: The Remembrance of God in the Early Hesychast Fathers', in ed. James S. Cutsinger, *Paths to the Heart--Sufism and the Christian East,* Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 2002, pp. 78-79. Cf. Imam Baqir.

[16] Cited by James Cutsinger, 'Hesychia: An Orthodox opening to Esoteric Ecumenism', in *Paths to the Heart,* p. 236

[17] As Jeremy Henzell-Thomas notes: *simple* denotes "same-fold" - that is, not multifarious, exactly what is denoted by the original meaning of "identity". It goes back ultimately to a compound formed from prehistoric Indo-European **sm-, *sem-,* *som-'same' (source also of English *same, similar, single,* etc) and **pl-* 'fold'. This passed into Latin as *simplus,* "single".

[18] Cited by Peter Samsel, 'A Unity with Distinctions: Parallels in the Thought of St Gregory Palamas and Ibn Arabi', in *Paths to the Heart,* p. 195.

[19] *Muhammad—His Life Based on the Earliest Sources,* M. Lings, Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 1996, reprint, Suhail Academy, 2004, p. 29.

[20] Ibid. p. 34.

[21] Ibid. p.47.

[22] Ibid. p.21.

[23] Surah al-Baqarah, II: 285.

STUDYING THE WESTERN OTHER, UNDERSTANDING THE ISLAMIC SELF: A QUR'ĀNICALLY REASONED PERSPECTIVE

Basit Bilal Koshul

The fact that Islam is facing a particularly difficult challenge in its socio-cultural encounter with the modern West is attentively detailed by Murad in his essay titled "Faith in the Future: Islam After the Enlightenment".[1] In the beginning of the essay he cites the late right-wing Dutch politician Prim Fortuyn as pointing to the root cause of the impasse. Fortuyn said: "Christianity and Judaism have gone through the laundromat of humanism and enlightenment, but that is not the case with Islam".[2] Foruyn's position requires contemporary Islam to pass through the Enlightenment in order for it to become a part of the modern world. In reaction to this diatribe from the right in Western Europe, certain quarters in the Muslim world assert that Islam must resist any and all constructive engagement with the Enlightenment tradition. The former position sees nothing good in Islam and requires a complete embrace of the Enlightenment while the latter position sees nothing good in the Enlightenment and advocates an assertion of Islamic ideals in the face of encroaching modernity. Both of these positions fail to note that the post-

Nietzschean critique of the Enlightenment has laid bare the fact that there is no such thing as Enlightenment orthodoxy. A careful review of the Enlightenment tradition reveals that it is composed of differing (and very often competing) voices, ideas and trends. This postmodern "discovery" brings with it the possibility of a more nuanced (and perhaps more fruitful) way of discussing the possibilities and dynamics of Islam's encounter with the modern West. While some elements in the Enlightenment are clearly repugnant to Islamic (and other religious) ideals other elements show remarkable convergence with Islamic ideals and teachings. Given the multiform character of the Enlightenment, a more adequate way of discussing Islam's encounter with Enlightenment modernity would be to identify those elements that are antithetical to Islamic teachings and propose a meaningful way of responding to the difficulties and challenges that they pose. Given the multiform character of the Enlightenment, this critical engagement with Enlightenment modernity has to be complemented with constructive engagement. The constructive engagement for its part will have to go beyond merely providing a list of the positive attributes of the Enlightenment and identify possibility and parameters of their affirmation from an Islamic perspective. I will first present a reasoned argument outlining the possibility (and necessity) of such a mode of engagement between Islam and the modern West. Then I will turn to the Qur'ān and demonstrate how this "reasoned" argument is rooted in the Qur'ānic narrative. I hope to offer a Qur'ānically reasoned argument that not only makes it possible to "understand the 'self' by studying the 'other'" but almost seems to predicate the very possibility of self-knowledge on a critical but empathetic understanding of the "alien" other.

At the risk of sounding pedantic I must offer a disclaimer at the very beginning of this discussion. Terms such as "Islam", "modern West", "Enlightenment", "modernity" etc. will be used quite often in the following pages. I am conscious of the fact that the reality that these terms refer to is far more varied (actually infinitely more varied) than my presentation suggests. That much having been said, I feel justified in using these terms in the manner that I do because I use them in a manner that is "objectively possible" and has proven to be so by numerous other investigations. These terms are "ideal types" in a strictly Weberian sense— concepts that have been abstracted from empirical reality in order to facilitate the conceptual mastery of that reality for the purpose of understanding (and eventually remedying) a cultural condition that the investigator finds to be deleterious.

Squaring the Circle: Islam and the Enlightenment Challenge

Murad notes that theology is "all about the successful squaring of circles"[3]— talking about the infinite mystery of God in finite human terms, asserting that in spite of appearances to the contrary God is as absolutely just as He is omnipotent, and asserting that the most valuable of knowledge is to be had by means that are as palpable as they are inexplicable. But the squaring of circles is not limited to spiritual concerns— it has socio-cultural implications as well. The particular character of Islamic monotheism leads to a universalism in which a particular religious tradition (i.e. Islam) seeks to integrate itself into and enrich cultures other than the one into which it was born. And the historical record indicates that Islam has been largely successful in this endeavour:

> Despite its Arabian origins, Islam is to be not merely *for* the nations, but *of* the nations. No pre-modern civilization embraced more cultures than that of Islam...The many-coloured fabric of the traditional *Umma* is not merely part of the glory of the Blessed Prophet, of whom it is said: "Truly your adversary is the one cut off" (108:3). It also demonstrates the divine purpose that this Ishmaelite covenant is to bring a monotheism that uplifts, rather than devastates cultures.[4]

This record of historical success makes the tensions characterizing Islam's encounter with modern Western culture that much more puzzling. For Murad the conflictual state of affairs between Islam and the modern West gives rise to the most serious of all questions: "[I]s the engagement of Islamic monotheism with the new capitalist global reality a challenge that even Islam, with its proven ability to square circles cannot manage?".[5] The answer given by ideologues, demagogues and zealots on both sides of the Islam-West divide is a resounding "NO!"

Murad argues that this negative response can be and should be challenged. He posits that turning to a spiritual form of Islam, as represented by Sufism, opens up the possibility of "a form of religion that elegantly and persuasively squares the circles" in the contemporary encounter between Islam and the West. This is an alternative to a "purely non-spiritual reading of Islam, lacking the vertical dimension [that] tends to produce only liberals or zealots; and both have proved irrelevant to our needs".[6] In contrast to blindness characterizing the fanatics and the slavishness of the liberals:

> A more sane policy, albeit a more courageous, complex and nuanced one, has to be the introduction of Islam as a prophetic, dissenting witness *within* the reality of the modern world.[7]

It is difficult to argue with Murad's conclusion that the successful squaring of the circle in the contemporary setting requires that the dissenting voice be located within modernity. But in order to do this adequately the difficulties and challenges inherent in such an undertaking need to be understood clearly. A close look at the defining characteristics of modern Western thought reveals the extreme difficulty of being a dissenting voice within the this tradition from the perspective of traditional religion and classical philosophy. It is well known that concern with wisdom, illumination and the Divine is at the heart of all pre-modern religious traditions. Recent studies of classical philosophy have shown that this also the case with the philosophical tradition. For example, Pierre Hadot notes that in spite of many differences regarding the particulars, all schools of classical Greek philosophy viewed the study of philosophy as a an "*askesis*" or philosophical exercises "linked to the custom of spiritual instruction".[8] The ultimate goal of these exercises was "to effect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practiced them".[9] Furthermore, philosophy as a means of "attaining wisdom" was seen as being inseparable from the choice of a particular way of life,

> [w]hether it is the choice of the good, as in Plato; or the choice of pleasure, as for the Epicureans; or the choice of moral intent, as for the Stoics; or the choice of life in accordance with the Intellect, in the case of Aristotle and Plotinus...[10]

In agreement with traditional religion, classical philosophy viewed human reason as one means among others in the pursuit of the ultimate goal (i.e. wisdom, illumination or the Divine). Additionally, both traditional religion and classical philosophy saw ethical praxis as an indispensable element in the exercise and disciplining of reason. In short the pre-modern religious and philosophical tradition sees the human mind as a finite and limited entity that needs the aid of external resources if it is to fulfill its function adequately. But Enlightenment philosophy categorically rejects the limited and relational character of the human mind/reason. Murad notes:

> The Enlightenment,..., as Descartes foresaw, would propose that the mind is already self-sufficient and that moral and spiritual growth are not preconditions for intellectual eminence...Not only is the precondition of the transformation of the subject repudiated, but the classical idea, shared by the religions and the Greeks, that access to truth itself brings about a personal transformation, is dethroned just as insistently.[11]

The repudiation of classical philosophy and traditional religion by Enlightenment thought has far reaching implications regarding the possibility of a meaningful "prophetic dissenting witness *within* the reality of the modern world". The possibility of such a voice requires that the critiquing, dissenting witness and the critiqued modern world share some common ground. In the absence of some common ground relating the critic to the critiqued there cannot be any critique from within, only (zealous) condemnation from without, or the obsequious surrender of the outsider. But Enlightenment philosophy categorically rejects all philosophical and religious notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine. From the Enlightenment perspective all talk about these "spiritual realities" is either irrational nonsense or a hermeneutical mask concealing economic interests, the will to power or libidinal desires. Because of the Enlightenment's notion of self-sufficient reason as the ultimate arbiter between doubt and certainty, the crucial question that any religious or philosophical voice aspiring to be a dissenting voice within modernity has to face is: Where is the common ground that I share with Enlightenment thought that allows for a meaningful exchange?

In addition to the aforementioned difficulty that faces all religious and philosophical traditions, Enlightenment philosophy offers Islam a particularly acute challenge. In the well known Ḥadīth i Jibra'īl, the salient features of *Īmān*, *Islām* and *Iḥsān* are described in detail by the Blessed Prophet— and it is implied that faith, peace/surrender and grace/plentitude are the natural order of things. If we take Descartes, Hobbes and Malthus as representative thinkers of the Enlightenment paradigm we can say that doubt, brutishness and scarcity/selfishness characterize the state of nature.[12] To the degree that Cartesian doubt, Hobesian brutishness and Malthusian calculations are part of the ethos that shaped (and is shaping) the modern West, it becomes that much more difficult to envision Islam playing the role of a "dissenting witness *within* the reality of the modern world". While other religious traditions are challenged by the Enlightenment paradigm, none is challenged more directly and acutely than Islam given the centrality of faith (*īmān*), peace/surrender (*islām*) and grace/plentitude (*iḥsān*) in the Islamic theological and socio-cultural vision.

Any attempt to square the circle in the modern setting requires a candid acknowledgement of the unique characteristics of the Enlightenment paradigm that has given birth to the modern reality. Because of the Enlightenment's rejection of the traditional religious/philosophical understanding of wisdom, illumination and the Divine human reason/mind are left as the only shared ground on which the dissenting voice and the dominant paradigm can relate to each other. Consequently, if the squaring of the circle is to be done as a dissenting voice from within the modern world then the following conditions will have to be met: a) human mind/reason be the court of appeal for all critique/complaints and b) human mind/reason be the foundation on which all principles are affirmed/stand. In other words reason and rationality have to be the starting point of both the critique of the Enlightenment paradigm and the affirmation of any (Islamic) alternative. In sum in order for Islam to be a dissenting voice from within the modern world, the squaring the circle means pursuing the twin tasks of critique of the Enlightenment paradigm and affirmation of the Islamic alternative "within the limits of reason alone".[13] While this task seems quite daunting one can scarcely imagine the implications for contemporary Islam's self-understanding if an affirmation of *īmān*, *islām* and *iḥsān* (if not *Īmān*, *Islām* and *Iḥsān*) can be accomplished "within the limits of reason alone". This apparent capitulation to the Enlightenment paradigm should not in any way be taken to mean that revelation and tradition have no role to play in Islam's contemporary encounter with the modern West (the next two section will detail the role of revelation and tradition in this regard). But it should be understood that since any appeal to "spiritual realities," religion and tradition place the dissenting voice outside the reality of the modern world, then such appeals are not directly relevant to Islam's contemporary attempt to square the circle.

Circling the Square: Islam and the Enlightenment Promise

If Islam has been supremely successful at squaring the circles in the past it is not just because it has had the ability to be a dissenting voice within a particular socio-cultural reality. Just as importantly, perhaps more importantly, Islam has been able to affirm the validity and authenticity of the deepest aspirations and yearnings of numerous non-Arab cultural configurations— and offer the resource of the Qur'ānic narrative in which these aspirations and yearnings can be expressed (augmenting and enriching the pre-existing expressions). This dual role of dissent and affirmation is in keeping with a holistic vision of the prophetic witness. Robert Ellwood notes that the apostle (or prophetic witness in our terms) is not merely a dissenting critic but also (and maybe more importantly) an affirming advocate. For Ellwood, the prophetic witness becomes a "spokesperson for an existing, but perhaps uncrystallized and emergent"[14] spiritual and ethical agenda that was already present in society. It is the task (and genius) of the prophetic witness to adapt and reconfigure these pre-existing (positive) trends in society, distinguish them from the established (negative) trends and attitudes inhibiting their emergence and affirm the positive trends from the perspective of his ministry. In other words, the prophetic witness offers a revelatory affirmation of some of the real but dormant aspirations and potentialities at the very heart of its socio-cultural environment, whose emergence and maturation is being forestalled by neglect and forgetfulness. In short, in addition to striving to be a dissenting witness from within an established order, the prophetic witness also strives to be an affirming voice from outside of that order— with the revealed word providing the grounds of affirmation.[15] Consequently, in order for the task of squaring the circle to be a meaningful exercise in Islam's contemporary encounter with the modern West, there has to be an Islamic affirmation of some of the deepest aspirations that are at the heart of the Enlightenment project.

The task of affirmation in the contemporary meeting of Islam with the modern world, pre-supposes that there is something worthy of affirmation. This for its part requires an identification of the affirmative side of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is not merely a negative program that rejects the reality of wisdom, illumination and the Divine, it is also a positive program that affirms the ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism. Expressing these Enlightenment ideals in their non-reified form, it can be said that the Enlightenment ideals affirm the irreducible dignity of the individual human being, the equality of all human beings before the law and the value/worth of the material and profane worlds. In conjunction with other ideas and in tension with still some others, these three ideals have shaped the social, political and educational institutions of the modern West. Speaking in the most general terms, it can be said that modern civil law, the modern political state and the modern secular academy/university represent the institutionalization of these ideals. While the depth and breath of institutionalization of these ideals has varied greatly in different Western societies, the past 3-4 centuries of Western history show an inexorable movement in this direction. An argument could be made (and has been made) that the United States has institutionalized Enlightenment ideals with a greater consistency and breadth than any other Western country. The evidence in favour of this contention is not insignificant. What cannot be contested is the fact that the modern West's institutions, self-understanding and historical development are all inextricably tied to these three ideals. The Enlightenment break with traditional religion[16] is as much tied to the affirmation of individualism, universalism and materialism as to the rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine. In short, the institutionalization of these three ideals represent those positive affirmations that set Enlightenment thought apart from traditional religion.

This Enlightenment affirmation provides the opportunity for the monotheistic religious traditions to engage with the Enlightenment tradition on a positive note. Beginning with Max Weber[17] in the early part of the 20th century, a body of literature has been steadily accumulating demonstrating that critical Enlightenment ideas and ideals cannot be understood in isolation from the sublimation of a particular religious impulse. Alasdair McIntyre,[18] Peter Berger,[19] John Milbank,[20] and Rodney Stark[21] (among others) have further detailed the intimate link between religious ideals and the birth of modern West. The sociologists in this list have gone so far as to suggest that secularization of human culture becomes an historical possibility only with the emergence of monotheism and that the modern, secular West is the product of a particularly monotheistic religious development. To the degree that the analysis linking monotheism with modernity is correct, it provides the traditional monotheistic religions with the opportunity to consider the Enlightenment as a post-traditional expression of monotheistic ideals. From the Islamic perspective the Enlightenment can be seen as a post-Qur'ānic monotheistic tradition— in a very limited, particular (but not insignificant) sense. But in addition to this opportunity that Islam shares with other monotheistic traditions for positively engaging with the Enlightenment, it is distinctively positioned to affirm key Enlightenment ideals in a way that other religious traditions can't. The Enlightenment affirmation of the dignity of the individual, equality before the law and the value of the material/profane world provides Islam with a unique opportunity to be an affirming witness from outside the modern world. It can be stated with confidence that Islam can affirm the three aforementioned Enlightenment ideals (in their non-reified form) with a greater degree of consistency and insistency than any other religious tradition. The fact that the Qur'ān is a revealed book by which the Divine instructed humanity in the ways of knowledge, wisdom, etc. locates Islam in the pre-modern historical period. Consequently, the

Qur'ānic event places Islam outside the modern world in a very particular and limited (but by no means insignificant) sense.

The Hajj is the one ritual in Islam that expresses the affirmation of the aforementioned ideals most comprehensively and the "circling of the square" (the *ṭawāf* around the Ka'ba) is among the most important rituals of the Hajj. This annual circling of the square is the Islamic affirmation of the irreducible dignity of the individual, the equality of all human beings before the law and the spiritual value of the material world and profane acts. During the Hajj all pilgrims perform the same rites, in the exact same way and in the exact same sanctuary. Furthermore, every act that the pilgrim performs, from eating and getting a haircut to circling the Ka'ba and standing at the plain of Arafat, is a consecrating act. There is no culminating event where a particular individual, from a particular tribe, goes into a particular part of the sanctuary to perform particular rituals that signal the culmination of communion between the human and the Divine. Similarly there is no particular caste whose members perform particular rituals to symbolize the human participation in the life of the Divine.

The rituals during the Hajj are a more intense expression of Islam's claim that all human beings in the post-Prophetic period are equally capable of becoming priests— individuals whose actions can transform the profane into the sacred and who can participate in the life of the Divine. There is no liturgy or consecrating ritual that is the exclusive privilege/domain of a group of people set apart from (or above) the rest of the community— all liturgy and all consecrating rituals are the collective heritage of the Ummah. Furthermore, there is no worldly act or material object that is not potentially sacred— all that is needed is for a believer to invoke the Word of God (in the tradition of the Blessed Prophet) to consecrate the object/act. In other words, potentially every human being is a Levite/Brahman, every place in the world the Holy Land and every worldly act (or material thing) a sacrament. From the Islamic perspective any act done by any human being at any time can be a means of communion/participation in the Divine life. For Muhammad Iqbal, this is the profound cultural and philosophic significance of the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood:

> The [Blessed] Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation [the Qur'ān] is concerned he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. The birth of Islam...is the birth of the inductive intellect. In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition. This involves the keen perception that life cannot for ever be kept in leading strings; that, in order to achieve full self-consciousness, man must be finally thrown back on his own resources. The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'ān, and the emphasis it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality.[22]

Consequently, it is stating the obvious that there are strong elective affinities between the Qur'ānic notion of the human being as an individual, humanity on a universal level and the material/profane worlds and the Enlightenment ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism.[23] The research of George Makdisi[24] on the rise of colleges, Marcel Boisard[25] on the rise of humanism and Richard Bulliet[26] on the rise of modern culture in the modern West (among others) suggests that there is causal link between the Islamic affirmation of these ideals and the emergence of these ideals in post-Rennaisance Europe. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to delve into this issue in detail, but a growing body of research suggests that the aforementioned elective affinities are not mere theoretical possibilities, but historical realities—

thereby providing the historical grounds on which future possibilities can be constructed. In short, Islamic ideals and teaching as well as modern scholarship on the historical exchange of ideas between Islam and the West suggest that the circling the square (i.e. the Islamic affirmation of modern Western ideals from outside of the modern world) is a real possibility.

The fact that Islam contains the resources to be an affirming witness from outside the modern world is a very attractive possibility for the present and the future. But at the same time it raises a very troubling question about the past. If it is indeed the case that Islam affirms the irreducible dignity of the individual, equality of all before the law and the inherent goodness of the material/profane worlds then the question emerges: Why is it that the modern, secular West has succeeded in institutionalizing these ideals with a degree of consistency than traditional Muslim society? The posing of this question and an honest facing up to it opens up the possibility of contemporary Islam gaining a better understanding of the historical development of which it is a product.

Robert Bellah[27] and Ernest Gellner[28] are two social scientists puzzled by the friction characterizing Islam's encounter with the modern world, precisely because they see the Qur'ānic event anticipating certain "modern" ideals, being open to them and affirming them. Gellner goes so far as to note that Islam appears to be better suited than any other pre-modern religious tradition to integrate itself into the modern world while maintaining the integrity of its foundational principles. They note that certain historical and institutional developments in traditional Islamic culture short-circuited the process of the complete rationalization and integration of the aforementioned ideals into the relevant institutions. Observations such as these suggest that while there are resources in the Islamic tradition that are indispensable for coming to terms with the modern world, there are also hindrances (both intellectual and institutional) that must be overcome. In other words, if the circling of the square is to be done in an honest and consistent manner then the affirmation of modern Western ideals from outside of the modern world must be complemented by a critical stance towards developments in Islamic history based on the same criteria (i.e. the Qur'ānic event). This means that the circling of the square requires a rejection of the uncritical affirmation of tradition (or a particular school within tradition) just as the squaring of the circle requires a rejection of the blind negation of tradition by the zealots and the liberals.

Squaring the Circle, Circling the Square— the Qur'ānic Warrant

The argument in the previous two sections can be summarized thus. Islam can gain valuable insights into its own inner ethos, historical development and latent potentialities by critically but constructively engaging with the modern West. This engagement has two aspects and both aspects are characterized by simultaneous affirmation and criticism— in the first part this is done "within the limits of reason alone" and in the second part it is done from the perspective of the Qur'ānic event.

Squaring the Circle: Islam plays the role of a prophetic dissenting witness from within the modern world— which means:

1. a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine and
2. a reasoned/rational affirmation the Islamic ideals of *īmān, islam* and *ihsan*

Circling the Square: Islam plays the role of a prophetic affirming witness from outside the modern world— which means:

1. the Qur'ānic affirmation of the Enlightenment ideals of human dignity, human equality and the value of the profane/material
2. the Qur'ānic critique of Islamic tradition for its failure to fully express key Islamic ideals in institutional form.

Having looked at the reasoned grounds on which this approach is built the discussion now turns to the scriptural grounds. In this section I offer the Qur'ānic treatment of Judaism and Christianity as informing the rationale underpinning the squaring the circle approach and the Qur'ānic treatment of the Fall from Eden (as interpreted by Muhammad Iqbal) as informing the rationale underpinning the circling the square approach.

In its engagement with Judaism and Christianity, the Qur'ān turns to the Bible at critical points in the discussion. On the one hand the Qur'ān affirms the validity of the Biblical narrative in very strong terms, thereby establishing it as the common ground on which it can interact with (and affirm portions of) the Jewish and Christian traditions. On the other hand the Qur'ān critiques particular beliefs and practices in the Jewish and Christian tradition precisely because they do not find any warrant in the Biblical narrative. The Qur'ān's employment of the Biblical narrative does not end here, it goes (much?) further. The Qur'ān goes on to assert that the Bible bears testimony to the verity of the Blessed Prophet's ministry— thereby affirming its own self-identity on Biblical grounds. While the Qur'ān turns to other sources besides the Bible in its engagement with Judaism and Christianity, it can be stated with confidence that its use of the Biblical narrative has a privileged place in the discussion.

The Qur'ān affirms the Torah in very strong terms. According to the hadith literature a group of Jews in Madinah came to the Prophet for a judgment on an halakhic issue— the punishment for adultery. In response to this query by the Jewish community to the Blessed Prophet the Qur'ān says:

> *...why do they come to you for judgment when they have the Torah with God's judgment and even then still turn away? These are not believers. We revealed the Torah with guidance and light* (5:43).

The Qur'ānic affirmation of the Gospels is in very similar terms:

> ***We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, in their [the Hebrew Prophets'] footsteps, to confirm the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospels with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed– a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God*** (5:46).

The fact that the affirmation of the Torah and Gospels as containing "guidance, light" holds true even for the maculate versions of these scriptures is suggested by the following *ayah*. Here the Qur'ān asks the Blessed Prophet (and the Muslims) to directly address the Jews and Christians possessing sacred scriptures:

> ***Say, "People of the Book, you have no true basis [for your religion/arguments] unless you uphold the Torah, the Gospels and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord."*** (5:68).

The Qur'ānic affirmation of the Torah and Gospels is further accentuated by the fact that it uses these scriptures as proof texts in its critique of particular beliefs and practices in the religious traditions claiming a Biblical origin. On certain occasions the Qur'ān states explicitly that there is no Biblical warrant for a particular belief/practice, i.e. 3:93 in reference to Jewish dietary laws, 3:65 in reference to Jewish and Christian claims regarding the religious identity of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). On other occasions it implies that there is no Biblical warrant by using phrases such as "We did not enjoin it on them..." (57:48) in reference to Christian monasticism, or phrases like "Say bring forth your proof if you are indeed truthful" (2:111) in reference to Jewish claims about the outcome of the Final Reckoning. The possibility that the Qur'ānic affirmation of the Torah and Gospel as containing "guidance, light" holds in the present tense, is made even stronger by the way that the Qur'ān uses the Biblical narrative as a witness on behalf of the ministry of the Blessed Prophet. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

I shall ordain My mercy for those who are conscious of Allah and pay the prescribed alms; who believe in Our Revelations; who follow the messenger the unlettered prophet they find described in the Torah that is with them and in the Gospels who commands then to do right and forbids them to do wrong, who makes good things lawful to them and bad things unlawful, and relieves them of their burdens and the iron collars that were on them (7:156-7).

In terms that we have used earlier, the Qur'ān is squaring the circle in relation to the Abrahamic/Biblical tradition. The Qur'ānic narrative is simultaneously playing the role of a dissenting prophetic witness from within the Biblical tradition while at the same time affirming its own identity on Biblical grounds. In very concrete and direct terms the Qur'ān links its own identity to the Abrahamic/Biblical tradition— which is the very tradition that it is also criticizing (in its Jewish and Christian variations). It is indeed the case that the Qur'ānic narrative goes on to transcend the grounds on which it engages Judaism and Christianity— but that transcending makes no sense whatsoever (actually it is not even possible) in the absence of the initial engagement. In other words the Qur'ān never questions the legitimacy of the common grounds that it shares with Judaism and Christianity. In fact, besides explicitly affirming these grounds as containing "guidance, light" the Qur'ān further affirms them by pointing out that particular beliefs and practices in Judaism and Christianity find no warrant in these grounds. The affirmation is further stressed when the Qur'ān claims to be the culmination and fulfilment of the Biblical event. In a significant part of its discourse with Judaism and Christianity, the Qur'ān engages these variants of the Abrahamic tradition— modifying a phrase used earlier— "within the limits of the Bible alone".

Given the manner in which the Qur'ān engages the Biblical narrative in its encounter with Judaism and Christianity, the question emerges: Does the Qur'ān contain any resources that make it possible for contemporary Islam to engage with the modern world in the same methodological terms? I think the answer is a very clear "YES". In the first section I identified the Enlightenment enshrinement of human reason as the single most daunting obstacle that any "dissenting voice within the reality of the modern world" has to face. The manner and frequency with which the Qurʾān addresses the issue of *ʿaql* or "reason" and "rational thought" suggests that the valuation of these sources is not completely dissimilar from its valuation of the Biblical narrative. If this is indeed the case then an argument can be made that there is Qurʾānic warrant for engaging with Enlightenment paradigm "within the limits of reason alone." Before detailing the Qurʾānic valuation of *ʿaql* in light of its valuation of the Torah and the Gospels, a brief word on another similarity. It is obvious that there is a significant difference between the Qurʾānic "*Tawrāt*" and the "Torah" of Rabbinic Judaism. It is also the case that the Qurʾānic "*Injīl*" differs significantly from the "Gospels" of the Church. In spite of these radical (and unbridgeable) differences it would be patently false to claim that there is no similarity between the Qurʾānic and the non-Qurʾānic conceptions. It would have to be further acknowledged that the similarity is significant enough for a meaningful conversation and exchange to be based on "Biblical grounds". Similarly, the Qurʾānic understanding of *ʿaql* differs significantly from the Enlightenment understanding of "reason" and "rationality"—but this difference is not so huge as to preclude the possibility of "reason" providing a common ground for conversation and exchange. If the similarity between the Qurʾānic *ʿaql* and Enlightenment "reason" and "rationality" is not recognized (or if there is no similarity to be recognized)[29] then any interaction between Islam and the Enlightenment tradition will be an exercise in polemics and apologetics rather than meaningful exchange.

While the Qurʾān does not explicitly say that human *ʿaql* contains "light, guidance" it does say repeatedly that misguided people groping about in the dark are not using their reasoning faculties (*'aql*) properly. On nearly two dozen occasions the Qur'ān condemns those who misuse their *'aql* and thereby turn away from light and guidance. For example, the Qur'ān has Abraham (peace be upon him) saying to the idol-worshippers:

> ***Shame upon you and that which you worship besides Allah! Will you not, then, use your reason?*** (21:67)

On the Day of Judgment, Allah will say to those who followed Satan:

> ***He had already led astray a great many of you: could you not, then use your reason?*** (36:62).

On nearly three dozen other occasions the Qur'ān states those who use their *'aql* properly will be blessed with "seeing the light" (so to speak) and guided to straight path. For example:

> ***Thus do We spell out these*** **ayaat (signs)** ***unto people who use their reason*** (30: 28).

And:

> ***And in the succession of night and day, and in the means of subsistence which God sends down from the skies, giving life thereby to earth after it had been lifeless, and in the change of the winds: [in all this] there are*** **ayaat (signs)** ***for people who use their reason*** (45:5).

What the Qur'ān lacks in explicit formulation it makes up by implicit pointers. While never explicitly saying that human reason contains "light, guidance", on nearly five dozen different occasions the Qur'ān draws attention to the inherent value in using the *'aql* properly and the pitfalls of not using it properly. In contrast there are only about one dozen references to the Torah and Gospels in the same vein. Consequently, the use of reason as the grounds on which to critique the Enlightenment and affirm the Islamic alternative is as Qur'ānically authentic as the Qur'ān's use of the Bible in its engagement with Judaism and Christianity.

In light of the foregoing discussion on the necessity of remaining "within the limits of reason alone" in the critique of the modern world, it is obvious that critiques of modernity emanating from the quarters of perennial philosophy and different traditionalisms are inadequate. But the fact that these responses do not measure up to the standards proposed in this presentation is not their most egregious offence (if it can be considered an offence at all.) Far more egregious is the fact that these critiques violate a cardinal principle that is at the heart of all spiritual teachings. Because of this violation (which may actually be a logical corollary of not remaining within the limits of reason alone in the critique of the Enlightenment) perennialism and traditionalism have practically abdicated the role/responsibility of being an affirming prophetic witness. In its Islamic expression this cardinal principle of spiritual teachings is the Sufi saying that "all things have two sides, one pointing to God and the other pointing away from God". In the context of the present discussion this basically means that one can/should take a stance of critiquing dissent and affirming witness with respect to all cultural phenomena. It simply cannot be the case that the Enlightenment is worse than the days of *jāhiliyyah*— even the pre-Islamic Arab tradition had noble characteristics that Islam not only affirmed but internalized. But in looking at the analysis of modernity produced by the aforementioned schools, one can be excused for coming to the conclusion that the Enlightenment is an absolutely unique phenomenon in human history in the sense that it has only one side— and that side is worthy of only critique and condemnation. It might have been plausible to dismiss the Enlightenment as having only one side— the one that faces away from God— in the 18th and 19th centuries. But given the evidence that has been accumulating since the beginning of the 20th century it is difficult to discount the fact that a religious/monotheistic impulse is at work within the Enlightenment paradigm. Consequently, it is among the most pressing demands of the day to face this paradigm squarely (both in its negativity as well as its positivity) and engage with it constructively.

Muhammad Iqbal's interpretation of the mythic Fall from Eden provides the grounds on which a constructive response to the Enlightenment can be articulated on Qur'ānic grounds. Iqbal argues that from the Qur'ānic perspective the Fall, as painful and tragic as it was, also made human culture, goodness, and faith possible. Prior to the fall it is not possible to speak of any of these things because in the Garden "there is neither hunger, nor thirst, neither heat nor nakedness" (20:118-119). For Iqbal the human being's blissful state of existence in the Garden of Eden is symbolic

> of a primitive state in which man is practically unrelated to his environment and consequently does not feel the sting of human wants, the birth of which alone marks the beginning of human culture".[30]

We can take Iqbal's observation further and note that the human being's relationship with the Divine is also characterized by the same naiveté as his relationship with the physical environment in Eden. Prior to the Fall there is no question of lack of faith, doubt, or distance between the human and the Divine— these are not even possibilities prior to the Fall. For Iqbal the Fall is the event that brought with it new possibilities of human relations with the Divine, with the physical environment and with other human beings— relations based on a free, conscious, rational choice in contrast to relations based on a naïve acceptance (and affirmation) of the given. For Iqbal the Fall symbolically represents,

> man's rise from a primitive stage of instinctive appetite [and we can say naïve faith] to the conscious possession of a free self, capable of doubt and disobedience [and we may say consciously/rationally chosen faith]. The Fall does not mean any moral depravity; it is man's transition from simple consciousness to the first flashes of self-consciousness, a kind of

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> waking from the dream of nature with a throb of personal causality in one's own being.[31]

Iqbal does not see the Fall as some catastrophic tragedy in some absolute ontological sense. This interpretation of the Fall requires a re-thinking of the first act of disobedience. The fact that the act is a mistake is self-evident because the individuals who committed it recognized it as being such. But that does not mean that the act has only negative connotations. Iqbal notes:

> Man's first act of disobedience was also his first act of free choice; and that is why, according to the Qur'ānic narration, Adam's first transgression was forgiven. Now goodness is not a matter of compulsion; it is the self's free surrender to the moral ideal and arises out of a willing co-operation of free egos. A being whose movements are wholly determined like a machine cannot produce goodness. Freedom is thus a condition of goodness.[32]

It is only in the aftermath of this act of disobedience that we can speak of the possibility of human-Divine relation being a matter of a "free surrender to [a] moral ideal aris[ing] out of a willing co-operation of free egos". To put it bluntly, the Fall brings with it the possibility of a qualitatively different[33] human affirmation of the Divine (and a Divine affirmation of the human[34]) than was possible prior to the Fall.[35]

Iqbal's description of the Fall suggests the tasting of the forbidden fruit heralded the onset of an enlightenment prior to the modern Enlightenment. The enlightenment resulting from the tasting of the forbidden fruit was the result of the exercise of a God-given wilful free choice, brought with the birth of a new (rational) consciousness and opened up new horizons of human culture and human relations with the Divine. The fact that the more recent Enlightenment period marks the birth of new understanding of human consciousness, human will and human freedom is not disputed by anyone. Perhaps a more cautious (and accurate) statement would be that the Enlightenment offered a more rational and comprehensible description of human will, human freedom and human consciousness than was possible prior to it. On all of these points the Enlightenment departs from tradition and opens up new horizons for human culture and human consciousness. Going beyond the rhetoric of good and evil and leaving aside value-judgments, it can be stated with confidence that the Enlightenment break with tradition is not unlike the original Fall from Eden— an act that results from the tasting of the forbidden fruit and creates a rupture as a result but which at the same time also contains the resources not only for self-correction but also self-enhancement. The fact that there is an element of the "Fall" in the Enlightenment is recognized by the religiously unmusical Max Weber— but the same intellectual honesty that leads him to see the problematic side of the phenomenon also opens up his eyes to the latent potentialities in it:

> The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the *meaning* of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself. It must recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge...[36].

Taking Weber's observation as a starting point, but going beyond it, it can be further said that as was the case with the enlightenment resulting from the original Fall the potential for self-correction and self-enhancement in the aftermath of the modern Enlightenment can only be realized with the aid of the Divine Word.

In sum the Qur'ānic engagement with Judaism and Christianity provides scriptural grounds of the rationale informing the squaring of the circle approach. And the Qur'ānic narrative of the Fall, as interpreted by Iqbal provides the scriptural grounds of the rationale informing the circling of the square approach. Taken together this scripturally grounded rationale complements and affirms the rationale based on reason offered in the first two sections of this paper regarding the most fruitful and promising approach to take in Islam's encounter with the modern West.

A Final Word

I began my presentation by noting Murad's observation that in order to square the circle adequately, contemporary Islam will have to become a "prophetic, dissenting voice within the reality of the modern world". During the course of my presentation, I have tried to remain consistent with the line of reasoning contained in this observation. If I depart from some of Murad's conclusions it is only because of the imperative of consistency (or at least I'd like to think this is the case). Remaining consistent with this line of reasoning means that the dissent from the Enlightenment can only be "within the limits of reason alone". It also means that the prophetic witness will have to play the indispensable role of affirming witness from outside the Enlightenment tradition— affirming some of the deepest aspirations of Enlightenment ethos from the Qur'ānic perspective. In the last section I have endeavoured to provide the Qur'ānic warrant for the reasoned rationale informing the squaring the circle and circling the square approach, thereby suggesting there is a common logic underpinning both the reasoned and the Qur'ānic rationales. As a final word I'd like to explicitly articulate this logic. The logic underpinning both of the approaches offered above with respect to the ultimate goal of Islam in its encounter with the modern West is not to critique-condemn-replace but to redeem-reform-embrace. It is obvious that this is the Qur'ānic logic in its engagement with Judaism and Christianity as well as its approach to the events surrounding the Fall. Speaking from the Qur'ānic perspective, while there is certainly something deeply problematic in the modern reality that needs to be critiqued loudly (just as there is something deeply problematic in the Jewish and Christian traditions, as well as the Fall that needs to be critiqued loudly), the critique cannot become reified. The critique is a means towards redeeming, which itself is a prelude to reforming with the ultimate goal being the embracing of the afflicted paradigm/event.[37]

In the final analysis if there is one unredeemable part of the Enlightenment tradition it is the fact that it allowed its critique of illumination, wisdom and the Divine turns into an outright rejection because of the reification of the critique. The flip-side of this reified critique is the fact that the Enlightenment affirmation of individualism, universalism and materialism became a set of reified/dogmatic assertions based on completely abstract concepts rather than a living (and life-giving) ethos. It is obviously the case that the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment analysis of illumination, wisdom and the Divine laid bare deeply problematic aspects of traditional culture that were not known before. But instead of endeavouring to redress these problematic aspects of traditional culture as a "philosophic healer" using the resources already present in the afflicted paradigm, Enlightenment thought played the role of a colonizing imperialist on a mission to civilize the savages by means of socio-cultural engineering. In short the only unredeemable aspect of the Enlightenment is that its stance towards non-Enlightenment paradigms is one of critique-condemn-replace.

But in the interests of intellectual honesty it must be forcefully stated that the "sin" of reification is not a peculiarly Enlightenment/modern/Western shortcoming— it is a universal human potential. Furthermore, long before the birth of the modern West, this potential was actualized repeatedly during the course of history by every "traditional" religion known to historians. The very fact that each religious tradition has witnessed a "reformation" of some type is evidence enough of the fact that reification has set in. Social scientific analysis of the different religious tradition has laid bare the inescapable fact that particular theologies and institutions, throughout the course of religious history, have been identified with Absolute or Ultimate Truth. This is no less true of the Islamic tradition than others. Just as the effective diagnosis and remedy of the reifications of religious traditions in the past did not mean the abandoning of the tradition itself, a meaningful response to the reifications of the Enlightenment tradition cannot mean the abandoning of the tradition itself. To adopt the position that the Enlightenment tradition has to be abandoned in its entirety in response to its shortcomings is to exhibit the worst characteristics of that which one is critiquing and rejecting. This basically means that one has adopted the same attitude towards the Enlightenment paradigm that the Enlightenment paradigm had adopted towards traditional religion and classical philosophy. This is not only a modernist move in the most negative sense, but also one that is unlikely to bear fruit. A more sane approach "albeit a more courageous, complex and nuanced one" and one that is built on scripturally (Qur'ānically) reasoned grounds is redeem-reform-embrace—an approach that will lead to enhanced understanding on the part of a troubled and alienated self, as a result of it critical but empathetic study of the alien other.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Murad, A. (2002) "Faith in the Future: Islam After the Enlightenment" at http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/postEnlight.htm. 8.
[2] Cited by Murad, 3.
[3] Murad, 1.
[4] Ibid, 2.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid, 9.
[7] Ibid, 8.

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[8] Hadot, P. (2002*) What is Ancient Philosophy?* Translated by Michael Chase. Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press. 188.

[9] Ibid, 6.

[10] Ibid, 175.

[11] Murad, 9.

[12] It is obviously the case that the Enlightenment paradigm does not define the modern West in its totality, and it is equally obviously the case Descartes, Hobbes and Malthus do not exhaust the possibilities of Enlightenment thought. Enlightenment thought and the ideas of these thinkers are cited here only to bring into sharp relief the uniquely modern character of the problematic that Islam must face (and face up to) in its attempt to square the circle.

[13] This phrase is used with due acknowledgment (and apologies) to Kant.

[14] Ellwood, R. (2003) *Cycles of Faith: The Development of the World's Religions.* California: Altamira Press. 85.

[15] Mohammed Bamyeh has authored a recent study detailing the fact that the Blessed Prophet simultaneously built upon and critiqued/dismantled existing ideas and structures from the pre-Islamic era. See Mohammed A. Bamyeh *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, Discourse.* Minnesota, London: University of Minnesota Press. 1999.

[16] I do not mention classical philosophy at this point because Enlightenment self-understanding posits a continuation with and fulfilment of the classical philosophical tradition. While there is scholarly research that shows Enlightenment philosophy to be a break from classical philosophy in its rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine (i.e. Hadot), I am not aware of a similar argument showing that the Enlightenment understanding of individualism, universalism and materialism is also a departure from classical philosophy.

[17] See Max Weber (2002) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Press.

[18] See Alisdair MacIntyre (1984) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory.* Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Univ. Press.

[19] See Peter Berger (1967) *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

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[20] See John Milbank (1998) *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason.* Oxford and Massachusettes: Doubleday.

[21] See Rodney Stark (2001) *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[22] Iqbal, M. (1999) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.* Lahore, Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture. 100ff.

[23] In the previous section the examples of Descartes, Hobbes and Malthus were isolated from the Enlightenment tradition in order to highlight and sharpen the distinction between Islam and Enlightenment thought. Here three particular ideals are isolated in order to highlight the commonality. On both occasion the writer is well aware of the fact that countervailing arguments could be made – as a matter of fact he himself offers a countervailing argument in the present section to the argument made in the previous section (i.e. showing strong elective affinities between Islam and the Enlightenment ideals.) In the present case it could be argued that the guillotine in revolutionary France and the gas chambers in Nazi Germany are as much an expression of Enlightenment ideals as the three ideals that have been mentioned. Astute thinkers since the very birth of the Enlightenment have warned of the "dark" side of the Enlightenment – Pascal, Blake, Goethe, Rousseau – long before world wars, death camps, total war, mutually assured destruction etc. In more recent times, Weber (1978) [*Economy and Society.* Berkley, CA: University of California Press. Vol. 2.] is probably alluding to the role of guillotine in revolutionary France when he comments: "This charismatic glorification of 'Reason,' which found a characteristic expression in its apotheosis by Robespierre..." (p.1209). Richard Rubenstein (1987) takes Weber's analysis of bureaucracy and technology further and analyzes the Nazi Holocaust in its light in *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future.* New York: Harper Torchbooks. He argues that:

> *The Holocaust was an expression of some of the most significant political, moral, religious and demographic tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century.* The Holocaust cannot be divorced from the very same culture of modernity that produced the two world wars and Hitler (p. 6, emphasis in original).

And a little bit later:

> One of the least helpful ways of understanding the Holocaust is to regard the destruction process as the work of a small group of irresponsible criminals who were atypical of normal statesmen and who somehow gained control of the German people, forcing them by terror and the deliberate stimulation of religious and ethnic hatred to pursue a barbaric and retrograde policy that was thoroughly at odds with the great traditions of Western civilization. On the contrary, *we are more likely to understand the Holocaust if we regard it as the expression of some of the most profound tendencies of Western civilization in the twentieth century* (p. 21, emphasis in original).

Consequently, when Muslims point to the dark side of the Enlightenment they add nothing new to the discussion. The point of the present discussion is not to offer a value-judgment based on comparing and contrasting the "bright" side of the Enlightenment with its "dark" side. The goal is to identify the particular points on and the particular conditions under which Islam (in contrast to other religious traditions) can make a (uniquely?) positive contribution to the modern world, and also benefit from what the modern world has to offer. In the context of the circling of the square, the following observations by Iqbal are very much on the mark:

> Humanity needs three thing today – a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and the basic principle of a universal import directing the evolution of society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic systems on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men, while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich. Believe me, Europe today is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement. The Muslim, on the other hand, is in possession of these ultimate ideas on the basis of a revelation, which, speaking from the inmost depths of life, internalizes its own

> apparent externality...and in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Iqbal in *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (p. 142).

The fact that the Enlightenment ideals (i.e. the "bright" side of the Enlightenment) is currently under siege is obvious – and it is under siege from precisely the "dark" side of the Enlightenment. In its current predicament it is difficult to see how the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment can survive the assault from the unrestrained quest for economic profit, technological domination and manipulation of the environment and bureaucratic efficiency. This is what Rubenstein wrote in the concluding paragraph of his book after acknowledging that the book was the "result of one political conservative's attempt to reassess his views on politics and society in the aftermath of Watergate and the Nixon presidency" (p. 95):

> Much of this book has dealt with the fate of those who were rendered politically or economically redundant in earlier decades of this century. Their story is one of the most terrible in the annals of the race. In a time of diminishing affluence and increasing mass unemployment, their story carries a warning concerning our own future. The history of the twentieth century has taught us that people who are rendered permanently superfluous are eventually condemned to segregated precincts of the living dead or are exterminated outright. No genuine conservative could possibly defend policies or institutions that condemn an ever-multiplying number of people to such a fate. Such policies are recipes for unmitigated disaster. Before it is too late – and the hour is very late indeed – conservatives must distinguish themselves from defenders of selfish, anti-social privilege (pp. 96ff.)

Given the predicament of Enlightenment ideals, Islam is afforded with a unique historical opportunity to render a most meaningful service to modern humanity. If it is the case that the modern Muslim can affirm the ideals of human dignity, universal equality before the law and the value of the material/profane on the basis of revelation then Islam can provide a supra-rational affirmation of these ideals and inject fresh life and vigor into them. In return the Muslim would be in a position to move out his/her own state of spiritual stupor and lethargy.

[24] See, George Makdisi (1981) *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Higher Learning in Islam and the West.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. See also, his equally impressive work (1990) titled *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West: With Special Reference to Scholasticism.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[25] See the "Introduction" in Marcel Boisard (1988) *Humanism in Islam.* Indiana: American Trust Publications.

[26] See, Richard Bulliet (2004) *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization.* New York: Columbia University Press.

[27] See, Bellah, R. (1991) "Islamic Tradition and Problems of Modernization" in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World.* California: University of California Press. 146-167.

[28] See. Gellner, E. (1992) *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion.* London, New York: Routledge.

[29] If it is indeed the case that there is no similarity between Qur'anic *'aql* and Enlightenment "reason" then there is very little practical value or meaningful substance in the line of argument in this presentation.

[30] Iqbal, 67,

[31] Ibid, 67ff.

[32] Ibid, 68.

[33] As regards the qualitatively different "new possibilities of human relations with the Divine" an analogy could be drawn, based on the prophetic traditions, between the situation described here and that which is reported in the hadith literature; the difference between the earlier and later generations of believers and the possibilities that are available to the believers of the later ages.

حَدَّثَنَا هَاشِمُ بْنُ الْقَاسِمِ حَدَّثَنَا جَسْرٌ عَنْ ثَابِتٍ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَدِدْتُ أَنِّي لَقِيتُ إِخْوَانِي قَالَ فَقَالَ أَصْحَابُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوَلَيْسَ نَحْنُ
إِخْوَانَكَ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ أَصْحَابِي وَلَكِنْ إِخْوَانِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِي وَلَمْ يَرَوْنِي (مسند أحمد: 12169)
حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْمُغِيرَةِ قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا الْأَوْزَاعِيُّ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَسِيدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ دُرَيْكٍ عَنْ أَبِي
مُحَيْرِيزٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جُمُعَةَ رَجُلٍ مِنْ الصَّحَابَةِ حَدِّثْنَا حَدِيثًا سَمِعْتَهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ نَعَمْ أُحَدِّثُكُمْ حَدِيثًا جَيِّدًا تَغَدَّيْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَعَنَا أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ بْنُ
الْجَرَّاحِ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ خَيْرٌ مِنَّا أَسْلَمْنَا مَعَكَ وَجَاهَدْنَا مَعَكَ قَالَ نَعَمْ قَوْمٌ يَكُونُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِي وَلَمْ يَرَوْنِي (مسند أحمد: 16529)

The Prophet said, "I long to meet my brothers". The Companions asked, "Are we not your brothers?" He said, "You are my Companions

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but my brothers are those who have not seen me and have faith in me". (*Musnad Ahmad*, 12169)

Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah asked, "O Messenger of God, we have believed in thee and we have fought side by side with thee, would there be any body better than us?" The Prophet said, "Yes, those who shall be after you, those who have not seen me and have faith in me". (*Musnad Aḥmad*, 16529)

Mishkat, in the section titled "Bāb-al-Īmān" also has a report in the same vein. The text goes something like this:

"The Prophet asked the Companions, 'Who in all of creation possesses the most beautiful faith (*'ajab-al-īmān*)?' The companions replied "The angels." The Prophet said "How is it that they would not have faith while they are in the presence of their Lord." Then the Companions said; "The Prophets". The Blessed Prophet said "How is it that they would not have *Īmān* when wahy descends upon them." Then the Companions said, "Then it must be us". The Prophet replied "How is it that you would not have *Īmān* while I am among you". Then the Prophet said "Those among creation who have the most beautiful *Īmān* will be your brothers who come after you, they will find leaves with writing on them and they will believe in the contents".

[34] This is quite obvious from the text of a well known ḥadīth qudsi in which Allah says: "If humanity were to stop sinning I would destroy it and bring in its place a creature who sins – so that I may [have the opportunity to] forgive". This hadith suggests that the manner in which Allah relates to the human being plays a central role in His Own Self-Understanding. In the absence of the act of eating the forbidden fruit some of key attributes of Allah remain hidden or un-manifest – it is only in the aftermath of this "tragic" act that the Divine Glory has the opportunity to manifest itself more fully.

[35] It should be mentioned in passing that after the Fall it is not possible to return to the state of naïve bliss that was present before the Fall. Those who return to Eden in the here-after, Adam and Eve (peace be upon them both) no less than any other human being, will return with a very different understanding of the Divine, the human self and the relation of the human self to the Divine than they had when the originally left Eden. It is nothing more than naïve romanticism to

endeavour to recapture the bliss of the original naiveté after it has been shattered.

[36] Weber, M. (1949) "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." In *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. p. 57.

[37] I think that Murad is much closer to advocating a "redeem, reform, embrace" approach to the Enlightenment than appears to be the case at first glance. This is suggested by the proposal he makes regarding contemporary Islam's engagement with modern feminism. The following is a quote from the concluding part of Murad's essay titled "Islam, Irigaray and the Retrieval of Gender": http://www.masud.co.uk.islam./ahm/gender.htm

> Feminism, in any case, has no orthodoxy, as Fiorenza reminds us; and certain of its forms are repellent to us, and are clearly damaging to women and society, while others may demonstrate striking convergences with the Shari'a and our gendered cosmologies. We advocate a nuanced understanding which tries to bypass the sexism-versus-feminism dialectic by proposing a theology in which the Divine is truly gender neutral, but gifts humanity with a legal code and family norms which are rooted in the understanding that, as Irigaray insists, the sexes 'are not equal but different', and will naturally gravitate towards divergent roles which affirm rather than suppress their respective genius.

Murad is arguing that the most fruitful Islamic response to modern feminism is "redeem, reform, embrace" rather than "critique, condemn, replace". In this particular quote if the term "feminism" is replaced with "Enlightenment" and if the "sexism-versus-feminism dialectic" is replaced with the "modernism-versus-traditionalism dialectic" then it obvious that the "redeem, reform, embrace" approach is as applicable to the Enlightenment in general as it is to feminism in particular.

“*VOLTAIRE’S BASTARDS*”
A RESPONSE TO BASIT KOSHUL’S “STUDYING THE WESTERN OTHER...”

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

Postmodernism took hold of the intellectual scene during the later half of the twentieth century. It was well before its occupying the centre stage, while Modernity held its sway, that, amidst an erosion of earlier cultural values as well as a blurring of the distinctive characteristics of the world’s traditional civilizations— giving rise to philosophic and moral relativism, multiculturalism, and dangerous fundamentalist reactions— many thinkers diagnosed these tendencies and suggested various remedies. Best among these were characterized by a foundational critique of the modern world coupled with a call for intellectual reform; a renewed examination of metaphysics, the traditional sciences, and symbolism, with special reference to the ultimate unanimity of all spiritual traditions; and finally, a call to the work of spiritual realization. It was in the wake of Postmodernism that we hear a sage saying the following:

> ... it should be pointed out that if the West needs the East, the latter also has need of the West— not of the West as such, of course, but of such few thinkers in the West as have managed to integrate their experiences of the modern world in a traditional and spiritual outlook that might, if one likes, be

> described as "oriental" or "mediaeval". When in contact with the West, Orientals generally display an astonishing lack of suspicion and this can be explained by the fact that the modern world, while being a "necessary evil", is not a normal possibility. Now the Western elite to which we are referring is endowed with a "discernment of spirits" and a sense of proportion that often are lacking in Orientals; the latter, however, today stand greatly in need of these particular qualities, not on the still uncontaminated soil of their own civilisation where they understand what they are doing, but outside it in a chaotic world that violates every framework and insinuates itself everywhere."[1]

Basit is an Oriental by lineage but living in the West and receiving his entire education in the Western Academic world has given him the opportunity to "integrate his experiences of the modern world in a traditional and spiritual outlook." The recent outcome, his article "Studying the Western Other, Understanding the Islamic Self: A Qur'ānically Reasoned Perspective" has offered me the possibility to reconsider and re-evaluate certain settled convictions about the Enlightenment paradigm and the issue of the Western Other and to revisit the 'half-truths' that used to create obstacles to an appreciation of the point in question. I would have preferred to begin my response on a non personal note but since his article has held a mirror to my thinking and has challenged the mode of interpretation used for studying Modernity, I have been goaded into responding otherwise. It has changed the frontiers of my views on the matter and, in some cases at least, has pulled down the isolating walls that separated one perspective from another. The destruction of such walls may be an evil; but the virtues it helped to promote are indispensable and must be supported by other means. In what follows I have tried to explore these other means. But first let me mention a host of questions that assailed me during reading his article and think loudly about some of the premises which inform Basit's vision and see if these lead to a few complications, at least from my lights.

Basit speaks of "the twin tasks of dissension and affirmation from within *the reality of the modern world*"[2] (Basit, p. 4) that Islam has to undertake for successfully "squaring of the circle." As could be surmised from the general thrust of the argument in the article *the reality of the modern world* is equated with the Enlightenment paradigm and its social program that was "most consistently and systematically institutionalized in the modern, secular West."(Basit, p. 9) Can we refer to *the reality of the modern world* as a monolithic whole or there is a need to differentiate between the conceptual shifts that distinguish Modernity from the Postmodern and "beyond-Postmodern"[3] paradigms? According to my lights a distinction needs to be made on at least two counts; the obsessive concern with *society* that is a hallmark of Postmodernism as well as its radical departure from "Enlightenment philosophy's categorically rejects the limited and relational character of the human mind/reason" and "enshrinement of reason" (Basit, p. 5, 21) espoused by the Enlightenment paradigm to a position that could be termed as "the collapse of faith in reason's power, thus to hold court."[4] This would entail, for the obvious reason, that we take a different and perhaps more challenging set of "difficulties inherent" into consideration that arise with Postmodernism and its aftermath. I will have the occasion to say something more on this point later.

The same remark holds good for philosophy. "Concern with wisdom, illumination and the Divine" (Basit, p. 4) was shared by pre-modern religious traditions and classical philosophy and "philosophy as a means of "attaining wisdom" was seen as being inseparable from the choice of a particular way of life (Basit, p. 5).[5] Both the Enlightenment paradigm and its Postmodern and beyond-Postmodern conceptual shifts profoundly differ from this shared vision of the entire pre-Modern world. They are, however, not similar in their disagreement, hence can not be subsumed under a single disclaimer. If the Enlightenment paradigm revolted against the pre-Modern in the name of a Promethean humanism resulting in an "enshrinement of autonomous human reason" and claimed that that there is an objective, universally applicable court of appeal that can adjudicate between worldviews, determining their truth or falsity, Postmodernism is relativistic, nihilistic and signifies loss of faith in reason's power.[6] This remark allows for a digression.

Some where, during the course of its historical development, western thought took a sharp turn in another direction. It branched off as a tangent from the collective heritage of all humanity and claimed the autonomy of reason. It chose to follow that reason alone, unguided by revelation and cut off from the Intellect that was regarded as its transcendent root.[7] Political and social realms quickly followed suit. Autonomous statecraft and excessive individualism in the social order were the elements that shaped a dominant paradigm that did not prove successful.[8] A few centuries of unbridled activity led Western philosophy to an impasse.[9]

Commenting upon the situation, Huston Smith remarked, "the deepest reason for the crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason— reason without infusions that both power and vector it— is helpless. By itself, reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working, as it necessarily must, with variables, variables are all it can come up with. The Enlightenment's "natural light of reason" turns out to have been a myth. Reason is not itself a light. It is more than a conductor, for it does more than transmit. It seems to resemble an adapter which makes useful translations but on condition that it is powered by a generator."[10] The nature and direction of these "infusions" is still being debated.[11]

Clearly aware of reason's contingency, medieval philosophy attached itself to theology as its handmaiden. Earlier, Plato too had accepted reason's contingency and grounded his philosophy in intuitions that are discernible by the "eye of the soul" but not by reason without it. In the seventeenth century, though, responding to the advent of modern science with the controlled experiment as its new and powerful way of getting at truth, philosophy unplugged from theology. Bacon and Comte were ready to replug it at once, this time into science, but there were frequencies science still couldn't register, so philosophy took off on its own.

Modern philosophy took off in the seventeenth century by declaring its independence from theology; Descartes set it on its course by dedicating it to the proposition that reason, its instrument, can stand on its own. An important reason for thinking that modernity has come to an end is that its faith in autonomous reason has now collapsed. Recent developments in beyond-Postmodern (or reversionary Postmodern) theology indicate that, finding the Modern (read Enlightenment) position untenable, it now claims that its reason should not be called autonomous and therefore Modern, for it insists that it is not autonomous: reason in their view must be supplemented by vision. But this *augmented reason* still continues to look Modern to my lights in claiming the power to winnow the visions that supplement it, accepting or rejecting them by the standards it imposes.[12]

This brings us to the core issue of the *shared ground*. If Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernism are so radically apart on the question of reason and human rationality how can we safely speak of a *shared ground*? "Because of the Enlightenment's rejection of the traditional religious/philosophical understanding of wisdom, illumination and the Divine ***human reason/mind***[13] are left as the only ***shared ground***[14] on which the dissenting voice and the dominant paradigm can relate to each other. Consequently, if the squaring of the circle is to be done as a dissenting voice from within the modern world then the following conditions will have to be met: a) human mind/reason be the court of appeal for all critique/complaints and b) human mind/reason be the foundation on which all principles are affirmed/stand." (Basit, p. 7) All religious/wisdom traditions and almost all pre-modern philosophy drew a sharp distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* inasmuch as the latter operates intuitively and directly and were unanimous that reason operated in the restricted region of the mind's domain. Modernity, Postmodernism and, to a large extent,[15] beyond-Postmodern theology (or reversionary Postmodern) are at the antipodes of this view. I need not go into the details of the issue here as we are all well aware of the problem. The point I like to register is that it is difficult to see how, in the absence of a shared definition of reason and human rationality and with the collapse of faith in a universally applicable court of appeal, critiques/complaints could be addressed meaningfully and how the dissenting voice and the dominant paradigm can relate to each other?

Citing the examples of "squaring the circles in the past" in the case "of numerous non-Arab cultural configurations" (Basit, p. 8) he has mentioned the pre Islamic Arab civilization as well where "....the prophetic witness offers a revelatory affirmation of some of the real but dormant aspirations and potentialities at the very heart of its socio-cultural environment, whose emergence and maturation is being forestalled by neglect and forgetfulness." (Basit, p. 9) The argument culminates in saying that "there has to be an Islamic affirmation of some of the deepest aspirations that are at the heart of the Enlightenment project." (Basit, p. 9) According to my lights this seems to be a problematic analogy. No socio-cultural environment in the pre-Modern times had turned its back on Transcendence in the systematic way that characterized Modernity. The Arabs of the times of the Prophet had many dormant virtues and they had principles. Their principles were lacking in height, confined to the horizontal plane, without any consciousness of the relationship between human virtues and the Divine Qualities of which they are the reflections. None the less, human virtues cannot exist without their archetypes, which is another way of saying that in these men the apparently missing link was not absent but dormant; and inevitably the degree of dormancy varied from man to man. The prophetic witness triggered its awakening. It derives its legitimacy from the inherent principles and practice of the Islamic Tradition itself. Islamic Tradition, from its vantage point of being the summer-up, incorporated— obviously with alterations, amendments, abrogations and adaptations— the "Judeo-Christian" elements; especially the legal (or Shariite, in the technical sense of the word) aspects of the Mosaic code and the esoteric elements of the Christian message. These elements were brought to perfection in addition to the specifically Islamic aspects of the new faith in the Islamic revelation. This process, as it was accomplished on a purely vertical plane, had the stamp of divine sanction on it which distinguished it from any subsequent attempts that the Islamic community may had envisaged in the same direction. Nevertheless it had the significant role of setting the example for integrating ideas and symbols of pre-Islamic origin into the unitary perspective of Islam and its general framework. This could not be the case of a mindset which is woven out of a rejection of Transcendence. Enlightenment paradigm rejected Transcendence or a certain interpretation of it that denied human reason its legitimate rights and refused to meet its demands. This is a question that defies neat solutions and needs further deliberations to which I would return later.

Let me begin with an important clarification because my observations noted above may have led the readers to believe that I see the Enlightenment paradigm flawed on all counts. That is not the case. I have voiced my reservations about one, albeit a fundamental and very important, aspect of the Enlightenment project. I will rely on Huston Smith to make the point for me.

A worldview is an inclusive outlook, and it is useful to distinguish its social, cosmological, and metaphysical components. The social component of past worldviews included, at times, justifications for slavery and the divine right of kings, while its cosmological components described the physical universe as understood by the science of the day—Ptolemaic astronomy or whatever. The contents of those two components obviously change, so are not perennial. The perennial, unchanging philosophy is metaphysical, or more precisely, ontological. It concerns such matters as the distinction between the Absolute and the relative, and the doctrine of the degrees of reality that is consequent thereon.[16]

Following this threefold criteria I would like say a few words about the Metaphysical, Cosmological and Sociological achievements/shortcomings of Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernism, respectively. In doing so I am responding to Basit's assertion "it must be the case that the Enlightenment has two sides– one pointing to God and the other pointing away from Him." (Basit, p. 23) This is a very pertinent question because if the Enlightenment paradigm has its virtues and human virtues cannot exist without their archetypes how did Enlightenment come to possess these virtues without any consciousness of the relationship between human virtues and the Divine Qualities of which they are the reflections? Is that a phenomenon similar to the pre Islamic Arabia? Before we say anything on it let us have a brief overview of the Metaphysical, Cosmological and Sociological achievements/ shortcomings of Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernism.[17]

When we align these problems with the three[18] major periods in human history: the traditional period,[19] the Modern period,[20] and Postmodernism,[21] it is obvious that each of these periods poured more of its energies into, and did better by, one of life's inescapable problems than did the other two. Specifically, Modernity gave us our view of *nature*,[22] Postmodernism is tackling *social injustices* more resolutely than people previously did. This leaves *worldviews*—metaphysics as distinct from cosmology, which restricts itself to the empirical universe— for our ancestors, whose accomplishments on that front have not been improved upon.[23] Let us shuffle the historical sequence of the periods and proceed topically— from nature, through society, to the Big Picture, tying each topic to the period that did best by it. Modernity first, then Postmodernity, leaving the traditional period for last.

Cosmological Achievements of Modernity

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Europe stumbled on a new way of knowing that we refer to as the *scientific method.* It centres in the controlled experiment and has given us modern science[24] which adds proof to generic science by its controlled experiment. True hypotheses can be separated from false ones, and brick by brick an edifice has been erected from those proven truths. We commonly call that edifice the *scientific worldview*, but *scientific cosmology* is more precise because of the ambiguity of the word *world.* The scientific edifice is a *world*view only for those who assume that science can in principle take in all that exists. The scientific cosmology is so much a part of the air we breathe that it is hardly necessary to describe it.[25] Taught from primary schools onward, this story is so familiar that further details would only clutter things.

Tradition's Cosmological Shortcomings

That this scientific cosmology retires traditional ones with their six days of creation and the like goes without saying. Who can possibly question that when the scientific cosmology has landed people on the moon?[26] And there is another point. There is a naturalism in Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Islamic Cosmological doctrines and tribal outlooks that in its own way rivals science's calculative cosmology, but that is the naturalism of the artist, the poet, and the nature lover[27] not that of Galileo and Bacon. For present purposes, aesthetics is irrelevant. Modern cosmology derives from laboratory experiments, not landscape paintings.

Postmodernism's Cosmological Shortcomings

With traditional cosmology out of the running, the question turns to Postmodernism. Because science is cumulative, it follows as a matter of course that the cosmology we have in the twenty-first century is an improvement over what we had in the middle of the twentieth, which on my timeline is when modernity phased into Postmodernity. But the refinements that postmodern scientists (it is well to say postmodern *physics* here) have achieved have not affected life to anything like the degree that postmodern social thrusts have, so the social Oscar is the one Postmodernists are most entitled to.[28] Be that as it may, Postmodernism's discoveries (unlike modern discoveries in physics— the laws of gravity, thermodynamics, electromagnetism, relativity theory, and quantum mechanics, which continue to be used to make space shuttles fly and to help us understand how hot electrons behave in semiconductors) have concerned details and exotica.[29]

Outranking the foregoing reason for not giving the cosmological Oscar to Postmodernism is the fact that the noisiest postmodernists have called into question the very notion of truth by turning claims to truth into little more than power plays.[30] This relativizes science's assertions radically and rules out even the possibility of its closing in on the nature of nature.[31] As there are no neutral standards by which to judge these paradigms, Kuhn's thesis (if unnuanced) leads to relativism among paradigms that places Hottentot science on a par with Newton's. Kuhn himself phrased his thesis carefully enough to parry such relativism, but even taken at its best, it provides no way that science could get to the bottom of things. This demotes the whole enterprise of science as understood by Modernity, and in doing so provides a strong supporting reason for not giving Postmodernism the cosmological prize. It does better with social issues so now we discuss Postmodernism's achievements on the social front.

Postmodernism's Fairness Revolution

The magic word of Postmodernism is society. This is not surprising. With the belief that there is nothing beyond our present world, nature and society are all that remain, and of the two, nature has become the province of specialists.[32] This leaves society as the domain that presses on us directly and the one in which there is some prospect of our making a difference. And changes are occurring.[33] A quick rehearsal of some changes that have occurred in a single lifetime makes it clear that social injustices are being recognized and addressed more earnestly today than they were by our ancestors.[34]

Tradition's Social Shortcomings

These signs of progress acquire additional life when they are set against the unconcern of earlier times regarding such matters. This is an other way of saying what Basit has put forward in is question: "Why is it that the modern, secular West has succeeded in institutionalizing these ideals with a degree of consistency than traditional Muslim society?" There is no reason to think that traditional peoples were more callous than we are, but on the whole they saw their obligations as extending no further than to members of their primary communities: Buddhism's *dana* (gifts), Jesus' "cup of water given in my name," Islam's "pure due" and their likes. Encountered face-to-face, the hungry were fed, the naked were clothed, and widows and orphans were provided for as means allowed, but there human obligations ended. Injustices that were built into institutions (if such injustices were even recognized) were not human beings' responsibility.[35]

Modernity changed this attitude. Accelerating travel and trade brought encounters between peoples whose societal structures were very different from one another, and these differences showed that such institutions were not like natural laws after all; they were humanly devised and could therefore be critiqued. The French Revolution put this prospect to a historic test; scrapping the divine right of kings, it set out to create a society built on liberty, equality, and fraternity. The experiment failed and the backlash was immediate, but its premise— that societies are malleable— survived.

Modernity's Social Shortcomings

Modernity deserves credit for that discovery, and (if we wished) we might excuse it for its poor handling of its discovery on grounds that it was working with a new idea. The record itself, however, is by Postmodern standards, deplorable. Under the pretext of shouldering "the white man's burden" to minister to "lesser breeds without the law," it ensconced colonialism, which raped Asia and Africa, hit its nadir in the Opium Wars of 1841-42, and ended by subjecting the entire civilized world to Western domination.[36]

Having dealt with nature and society, let us turn now to the third inescapable issue that human beings must face: the Big Picture.

Modernity's Metaphysical Shortcomings

Modernity was metaphysically sloppy. Ravished by science's accomplishments, it elevated the scientific method to "our sacral mode of knowing" (Alex Comfort), and because that mode registers nothing that is without a material component, immaterial realities at first dropped from view and then (as the position hardened) were denied existence. In the distinction registered earlier, this was metaphysics reduced to cosmology.[37] Modernity's Big Picture is materialism or (in its more plausible version) naturalism, which acknowledges that there are immaterial things— thoughts and feelings, for example— while insisting that those things are totally dependent on matter. Both versions are stunted when compared with the traditional outlook. It is important to understand that neither materialism nor naturalism is required by anything science has discovered in the way of actual facts. We have slid into this smallest of metaphysical positions for psychological, not logical, reasons.

Postmodernity's Metaphysical Shortcomings

As for Postmodernity, it sets itself against the very idea of such a thing as the Big Picture. It got off on the right foot by critiquing the truncated worldview of the Enlightenment, but from that reasonable beginning it plunged on to argue unreasonably that worldviews (often derisively referred to as *grand narratives*) are misguided in principle.[38] Stated in the in-house idiom Postmodernists are fond of, worldviews "totalize" by "marginalizing" minority viewpoints. They are oppressive in principle and should be resolutely resisted. If hardcore Postmodernism were accurate in this charge one should stop in one's tracks, but it has not proved that it is accurate— it merely assumes that it is accurate and rests its case on examples of oppression that, of course, are not lacking. What has not been demonstrated is the impossibility of a worldview that builds the rights of minorities into its foundations as an essential building block. There is irony here, for the very Postmodernism that is dismissing the possibility of a comprehensive humane outlook is working toward the creation of such through its fairness revolution— its insistence that everybody be given an equal chance at the goods of life. The deeper fact, however, is that to have or not have a worldview is not an option, for peripheral vision always conditions what we are attending to focally, and in conceptual "seeing" the periphery has no cut off. The only choice we have is to be consciously aware of our worldviews and criticize them where they need criticizing, or let them work on us unnoticed and acquiesce to living unexamined lives.

Tradition's Metaphysical Excellence

Neither Modernity nor Postmodernism handled the metaphysical problem well. It is, of course, no proof that Tradition handled it better. The traditional worldview is so out of favour today that the only possible way to gain a hearing for it is to ease into it, so to speak, by suggesting plausibilities wherever openings for them appear. Describing the traditional worldview and defending its merits, therefore, comes close to being the object of an entire book.[39] I will not try to compress it into a page or two here. The present audience, I presume, agrees that with regard to the Postmodernism's religious alternative, we can speak of it in the singular and simply assume that a common metaphysical "spine" underlies the differences in the theologies of the classical languages of the human soul, the world's great religions. This is coupled with the claims of Tradition that people need worldviews, that reliable ones are possible, and that they already exist.

If mainline and polemical Postmodernism were to recede, the obsession with life's social dimension that they saddled us with would relax and we would find ourselves able to think ontologically again. An important consequence of this would be that we would then perceive how much religious outlooks have in common. For one thing, they all situate the manifest, visible world within a larger, invisible whole.[40] The further unanimous claim of religious cosmologies, though, finds no echo in science, for (being a value judgment) it is beyond science's reach. Not only is the invisible real; regions of it are more real and of greater worth than the visible, material world.

The inclusive, presiding paradigm for Tradition is the Great Chain of Being, composed of links ranging in hierarchical order from meagre existents up to the *ens perfectissimum*; and the foremost student of that concept, Arthur Lovejoy, reported that "most educated persons everywhere accepted [it] without question down to late in the eighteenth century."[41] To that endorsement, Ken Wilber has added that the Great Chain of Being is "so overwhelmingly widespread...that it is either the single greatest intellectual error ever to appear in humankind's history— an error so colossally widespread as to literally stagger the mind— or it is the single most accurate reflection of reality yet to appear."[42]

An obvious moral emerges from what has been said. If we run a strainer through our past to lift from each of its three periods the gold it contains and let its dross sink back into the sands of history what do we get? Modernity's gold i.e. science is certain to figure importantly in the third millennium, and Postmodernity's focus on justice likewise stands a good chance of continuing. It is the worldview of Tradition that is in jeopardy and must be rehabilitated if it is to survive. Being more specific, the present challenge to the Muslim world is reversed in the sense that it must learn to be tolerant of a world which threatens its very existence without losing its identity and the secularised West must learn the very difficult lesson that its Modern and Postmodern understanding of man and the world is not universal. Moreover, since religion does not acknowledge any principles higher than its own, not even the survival of the human race, if asked to establish peace, it will do so in its own way or not at all.

This brings me back to the initial question of the virtues of Enlightenment paradigm. Basit points out that "The Enlightenment break with traditional religion is as much tied to the affirmation of individualism, universalism and materialism as to the rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine" (Basit, p. 10) and "The Enlightenment affirmation of the dignity of the individual, equality before the law and the value of the material/profane world provides Islam with a unique opportunity to be an affirming witness from outside the modern world" (Basit, p. 11) and "This annual circling (Hajj) of the square is the Islamic affirmation of the irreducible dignity of the individual, the equality of all human beings before the law and the spiritual value of the material world and profane acts" (Basit, p. 11) "there are strong elective affinities between the Qur'ānic notion of the human being as an individual, humanity on a universal level and the material/profane worlds and the Enlightenment ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism" (Basit, p. 13). This brings us face to face with certain questions: Did in any epoch ever a worldview (and its translation into practice) achieve these "Enlightenment ideals of individualism, universalism and materialism" without turning its back on wisdom, illumination and the Divine? If Islam succeeded in achieving these ideals without paying its price of rejecting Transcendence (Hajj being a palpable example) what was the saving grace? Moreover Hajj is an Abrahamic ritual predating Islam and the Jews only stopped visiting the outlying Meccan Tabernacle of God when the corruption of its custodians had brought crude idolatry to the sacred precinct. Is it true that early Muslim society and, before that, other human collectivities, had achieved these Enlightenment ideals without severing their roots? A negative inference also imposes itself. If these ideals could be achieved without the burden of "wisdom, illumination and the Divine" why bother? If human reason is not autonomous and it needs objective data to operate effectively, what provided the Enlightenment project with its "infusions" with its rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine? Iqbal's "inductive intellect" (Basit, p. 12) is not relevant here as it proceeds in the presence of a revealed knowledge and within the parameters of a wisdom tradition. Do we commit a mistake when we attribute "rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine" to the Enlightenment paradigm? Is it only a reaction to the social side of the issue, the mixed bag of history that Modernity and, more resolutely, Postmodernity has manifested? As religions are worldviews or metanarratives— inclusive posits concerning the ultimate nature of things— its custodians cannot accept polemical Postmodernism's contention that on balance they oppress. We have observed that "the magic word of Modernity and of Postmodernity is society." Our present question bears on it, for it is almost entirely for their social repercussions that Postmoderns fault worldviews. In applying that measuring rod both Modernity and Postmodernity simply assume (they do not argue) that religion does more harm than good.[43] Whether this concern with society of Modernity and of Postmodernity is modern or instead modernly conceived, one can not be sure— the Stoics and Prophets were fairly good on the subject. But we cannot have enough of the concern itself.[44]

Basit continues: "This means that the circling of the square requires a rejection of the uncritical affirmation of tradition (or a particular school within tradition) just as the squaring of the circle requires a rejection of the blind negation of tradition by the zealots and the liberals" the Qur'ānic critique of Islamic tradition for its failure to fully express key Islamic ideals in institutional form." (Basit, p. 17) This is a task which, according to my lights, is innate to the Islamic tradition, its principle of movement. Do we require a reference to the Enlightenment paradigm to be alerted to its importance? If that is the case and we need awakening calls there is no problem with it.

The section dealing with "the Qur'ānic treatment of Judaism and Christianity as informing the rationale underpinning the squaring the circle" (Basit, p. 17 passim) is very illuminating and I can not agree more. I would offer only a few brief comments. Firstly, with reference to what has been said about the "shared ground" earlier it should be pointed out here that the critique/affirmation of Judaism and Christianity is the case of two sister wisdom traditions which share the common ground of wisdom, illumination and the Divine with Islam. In the case of Enlightenment no such sharing on principles seems to exist. Secondly his reading of the Qur'ānic texts would not please a large number of his coreligionists who are prone to making an exclusivist reading of the inclusivist verses of the Qur'ān. The danger of excluding those who can only open up to religious Other on the basis of upholding the normativity of one's own faith was vividly brought to light by the controversy over the book by the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks. The manner in which Dr. Sacks was compelled by senior theologians in his own community to retract certain sentences from his latest book, *The Dignity of Difference*[45] highlights well the intellectual challenge involved in reaching out to the Other without alienating one's own community. I pray that Basit is spared that fate.

Basit has emphasised the need for "a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine" (Basit, p. 17) and accused perennialism and traditionalism of the "most egregious offence" of insinuating that "the Enlightenment is an absolutely unique phenomenon in human history in the sense that it has only one side and that side points away from God" and has emphasized the "most pressing demands of the day to face this paradigm squarely and engage with it constructively." (Basit, p. 22) My assessment is rather different. It is not because I have deep sympathies or even affinities with some of them. I genuinely believe that the task of facing this paradigm squarely and producing "a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine" has been successfully done, to a large extant, by the authors of the same school.[46] Moreover, the "Perennialists" (Universalist is a better denominator!) are not the only ones who criticizes Modernity/Enlightenment in this vein.[47] This is also the verdict "beyond-Postmodern" or "reversionary Postmodernism" has passed on Modernity/Enlightenment paradigm. I will let David Ray Griffin make the point for me. David says, "Modernity paradigm, rather than being regarded as the norm for human society toward which all history has been aiming and into which all societies should be ushered— forcibly if necessary— is instead increasingly seen as an aberration. A new respect for the wisdom of traditional societies is growing as we realize that they have endured for thousands of years and that, by contrast, the existence of modern society for even another century seems doubtful. Likewise, Modernity as a worldview is less and less seen as The Final Truth, in comparison with which all divergent worldviews are automatically regarded as "superstitious." The modern worldview is increasingly relativized to the status of one among many, useful for some purposes, inadequate for others.[48]

With the "Perennialists" and their 'crime record' out of the way we can now turn to "The need for "a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection of wisdom, illumination and the Divine" (Basit, p. 17). S. H. Nasr, a prominent Perennialist, has time and again argued for the need emphasizing the rational approach and mode of engagement. "Today in the West, as well as in the Islamic world itself, there is an ever greater need to study both the principles and manifestations of Islam from its own authentic point of view and a manner comprehensible to contemporary man, or at least to one who possesses sufficient intelligence and good intentions. Moreover, this needs to be achieved by using methods of analysis and description which are at once logical and in conformity with the Islamic perspective; for this latter places the highest value upon intelligence (*al-'aql*) and logic, which is inseparable from it, although of course the transcendent realities cannot be reduced to logical categories. This type of writing which can 'translate' Islamic teachings into a contemporary idiom without betraying it is very important not only for non-Muslims who wish to learn about Islam but most of all for young Muslims, who are now mainly products of modern educational systems."[49]

Demands of reason should be satisfied— both the Perennialists and the "beyond-Postmodernism" or "reversionary Postmodernism" agree, but where they part company is in defining reason and its role/function in creating "a reasoned/rational critique of the Enlightenment rejection....." Huston Smith makes the point in the following remarks. "Whitehead's categories are demanding, but they *do* in the end fit into our three dimensional reason, from which it follows that to fit God into them is to position her inside our limited understanding. This translates into putting God in a cage. Religion must, to be sure, be intelligible in certain ways, but to try to make it *rationally* intelligible, fully so, is to sound its death knell. (In keeping with Perennialists generally, I draw a sharp distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* inasmuch as the latter operates intuitively and directly.) It is to squeeze the *pneuma*— a word usually translated as *spirit*, but etymologically deriving from *breath* or *air*— out of it, leaving us with what someone has called "flat-tire" theology. I realize that my rejection of Whitehead's "onto-logical principle" here will sound like mystery-mongering to process theologians, but, apart from the pejorative in the word mongering, I welcome the charge. *Vis-a-vis* most modern and postmodern theology, I side with Sir Thomas Browne, who complained in his *Religio Medici* that the religion he typically heard preached did not contain sufficient impossibilities, adding that it is "no vulgar part of faith" to believe things not only above but contrary to reason and against the evidence proper to our senses."[50]

In the present context we are concerned with the preliminary stage of removing obstacles which make it difficult or impossible for the mind to understand. Intelligence has its rights, and these have not always been upheld by the representatives of religion. Agreed. The mental faculties need to be appeased and re-assured; and to this end religion has no option but to sacrifice certain half truths, not to speak of mere suppositions and conjectures, which in the past were considered as powerful motives for loving God 'with all thy soul and with all thy strength' and a lack of which lead the Enlightenment thinkers to the revolt mentioned so often in this paper.[51]

I am also troubled by the thought that if Enlightenment could be considered as "a post-traditional expression of monotheistic ideals" (Basit, p. 11) and "the Enlightenment offered a more rational and comprehensible description of human will, human freedom and human consciousness than was possible prior to it" (Basit, p. 25) What kept Providence waiting so long to actualize its ideals and that only through an instrument which ostensibly rejected "wisdom, illumination and the Divine"? Basit's assertion, according to my lights, needs a strict qualifier here. I would read it as "the Enlightenment reasserted a more rational and comprehensible description of human will, human freedom and human consciousness than was possible in its milieu." According to my lights, it would be more accurate to say that Enlightenment was a case similar to that of Islamic science which influenced the West and provided it with foundations for its scientific enterprise but had a different trajectory in the West and resulted in a very different ethos.[52] Deliberation on this aspect of the issue may give us insights about the two faces of the Enlightenment paradigm.

This entails that while correcting Enlightenment on its rejections and claims of autonomous reason and emphasizing the essential requirement of "vectored reason", legitimate demands of reason should also be upheld. This does not mean— we add by way of a word of caution— that consciousness should be reduced to rationality alone i.e. discursive thought[53] or reason severed from its transcendent noetic roots,[54] since, to borrow the words of Iqbal, "The Total reality.....has other ways of invading our consciousness"[55]; there are "non-rational modes of consciousness"[56]; "there is the possibility of unknown levels of consciousness"[57] and "there are potential types of consciousness[58] lying close to our normal consciousness".[59]

On the practical level we are dealing with a received body of thought and praxis which, despite the Postmodern critiques of its conceptual foundations, continues to hold its sway in many ways. By head count the West is still Modern. Not only that; Enlightenment, its "rejection of the notions of wisdom, illumination and the Divine" and claims of autonomous reason, have perpetuated, in "reified/dogmatic assertions" (Basit, p. 27). We are dealing, not with Voltaire but, to use John Ralston Saul's term, with "Voltaire's bastards" responsible for dissolution of human values and the rejections mentioned above.[60]

Karen Armstrong has a very pertinent remark in her chapter on "Enlightenment" in *A History of God*. Concerning Voltaire she observed:[61]

The philosophers of the Enlightenment did not reject the idea of God, however. They rejected the cruel God of the orthodox who threatened mankind with eternal fire. They rejected mysterious doctrines about him that were abhorrent to reason. But their belief in a Supreme Being remained intact. Voltaire built a chapel at Femey with the inscription 'Deo Erexit Voltaire' inscribed on the lintel and went so far as to suggest that if God had not existed it would have been necessary to invent him. In the *Philosophical Dictionary*, he had argued that faith in one god was more rational and natural to humanity than belief in numerous deities. Originally people living in isolated hamlets and communities had acknowledged that a single god had control of their destinies: polytheism was a later development. Science and rational philosophy both pointed to the existence of a Supreme Being: 'What conclusion can we draw from all this?' he asks at the end of his essay on 'Atheism' in the *Dictionary*. He replies:

> *That atheism is a monstrous evil in those who govern; and also in learned men even if their lives are innocent, because from their studies they can affect those who hold office; and that, even if it is not as baleful as fanaticism, it is nearly always fatal to virtue. Above all, let me add that there are fewer atheists today than there have ever been, since philosophers have perceived that there is no vegetative being without germ, no germ without design etc.*[62]

Voltaire equated atheism with the superstition and fanaticism that the philosophers were so anxious to eradicate. His problem was not God but the doctrines about him which offended against the sacred standard of reason.

The question of reason in the Enlightenment paradigm and its subsequent reification could be read in a different light too. Schuon has remarked:[63]

> In speaking of the great theophanies– Beyond-Being, Being and Divine Centre of Existence, or Self, Lord and Logos-Intellect– mention has also been made of the human intellect (this being referable to the Logos), which is 'neither created nor uncreated':

> it is thus possible, if desired, to distinguish a fourth theophany, namely, the Logos reflected in the microcosm; this is the same Divine Logos, but manifesting itself 'inwardly' rather than 'outwardly'. If 'no man cometh unto the Father but by Me', this truth or this principle is equally applicable to the pure Intellect in ourselves: in the sapiential order– and it is only in this order that we may speak of Intellect or intellectuality without making implacable reservations– it is essential to submit all the powers of the soul to the pure Spirit, which is identified, but in a supra-formal and ontological manner, with the fundamental dogma of the Revelation.

Its degeneration is what is relevant to our present discussion. He says:[64]

> When the Ancients saw wisdom and felicity in submission to reason, both human and cosmic, they were referring directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, to the one Intellect. The proof of this lies precisely in the fact that they linked reason to Universal Nature; *in practice many committed the error of reducing this Nature to human reason,*[65] after having reduced God to Nature. This double reduction is the very definition of Greco-Roman paganism, or of the Greco-Roman spirit in so far, as it was pagan, and not Platonic; it may be added that only the Man-Logos or Revelation 'resuscitates' and gives full importance to reason,[66] and only an exact notion of the Absolutely Real and of its transcendence gives a meaning to Nature.

It is not difficult to see where does Enlightenment stand in this perspective and the way it has to be redeemed! "Beyond-Postmodernism" or "reversionary Postmodernism" would also like to see the Enlightenment paradigm humbled in many ways and it insists on "reason supplemented by vision."[67] Its vision statement could be summarised in Griffin. David Ray Griffin concludes his statement, in *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, with a prophetic call for a new, postmodern science that will support rather than oppose theology. It is a bracing summons, but it rides a crucial oversight. To the extent that science moves in the direction Griffin wants it to, it will relax its effort to control and will content itself with trying to describe, because most of the things Griffin wants it to add to its repertoire— the immaterial, qualities, final causes, freedom, downward and divine causation— cannot be manipulated. There is nothing wrong with describing, of course, or anything sacrosanct about control. Quite the contrary; the most valuable aspect of Heidegger's entire corpus is his analysis of the way Western civilization has drifted toward calculative reason and the disaster portended by that drift. The question is not whether we should correct this drift, as Griffin and Basit are both convinced we should; the question concerns division of labour and what Confucius called "the rectification of names." I see "reversionary Postmodernism" as still wedded to the modern conviction that science is the privileged mode of knowledge. If this conviction be true, it stands to reason that all knowing should enter its camp. And so "reversionary Postmodernism" would have it: "science . . . means knowledge," he Griffin us, so "even the modern boundary between science and theology will ... be overcome."[68] Basit parts company with the "reversionary Postmodernism" at this point as could be surmised from his argument developed in his fine comparative study of Ghazali and Ibn Rushd on the issue of reason and revelation.[69]

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On the question of "interpretation of the mythic Fall from Eden" (Basit, p. 22) it is difficult to see eye to eye with Basit. I do not see the Fall in the same light as presented here and my interpretation of Iqbal also departs from that of Basit. A few remarks would suffice at the moment. He says, "Fall.... also made human culture, goodness, and faith possible." (Basit, p. 23) Goodness is a different affair; but it made human culture and faith possible; faith by way of a compensation not an improvement. Qur'ānic narrative is very clear that the Fall was a part of the Divine scheme and outward revelation necessitated in the wake of the Fall was not adequated to a higher state of consciousness, as Basit gives us to understand, but rather an adjustment to the needs of a fallen humanity. When the "vision is face to face"[70] there is no question of faith, naïve or otherwise. Expressions like "naiveté and lack of consciousness", "instinctive appetite [and we can say naïve faith]" hardly make any sense in that context. Moreover, Iqbal is not the first to have noted the two sides of the Fall. The "fortunate sin" (*flex culpa*) "brings with it the possibility of a qualitatively different human affirmation of the Divine" but not a qualitatively better affirmation. Insisting on that would tantamount to denying the state of perfection that all religious traditions have unanimously looked back to and ignoring every thing that is implied in the idea of the Centre and the Origin dominating all pre-Modern civilizations.

The formal world being made up of dualities, the Intellect, once it has been projected by virtue of its 'fall' into material and psychic substances, is split into two poles, the one intellectual and the other existential; it is divided into intelligence and existence, into brain and body. In the Intellect, intelligence is existence, and inversely; distinction of aspects does not in itself imply a scission. Scission occurs only in the world of forms.[71]

A comparison of Iqbal's narrative of the Fall with Milton[72] would yield interesting insights here but that would carry us too far afield. I am pressed to content myself with a quote which comes from a very different kind of book, *The Secret of Shakespeare.*[73]

> Shakespeare, unlike Milton, has no illusions about the scope of reason. He knew that since reason is limited to this world it is powerless to 'justify the ways of God'. Milton may have known this in theory, but in practice he was very much a son of the Renaissance, very deeply under the spell of humanism. Paradise Lost cannot be called an intellectual poem. Milton portrays the next world by sheer force of human imagination. His God the Father, like Michelangelo's, is fabricated in the image of man;

and the purely logical arguments which he puts into the mouth of God to justify His ways inevitably fail to convince us. Now Shakespeare also seeks to justify the ways of God to man. That is, beyond doubt, the essence of his purpose in writing. But his justification is on an intellectual plane, where alone it is possible; and this brings us back to the theme of his plays, for the intellect is none other than the lost faculty of vision which is symbolized by the Holy Grail and by the Elixir of Life.

Here I would like to quote the leading Iqbal scholar of India, S. R. Farooqi, on the issue. Farooqi says:[74]

> Under no pressure to rationalize, Iqbal is not much preoccupied with the Fall. Even his famous observation in the "Reconstruction" that the fall is "man's transition from simple consciousness to the first flash of self consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream nature with a throb of causality in one's own being" leaves Satan entirely out of the reckoning and is borrowed from St. Augustine without much critical examination. Cleanth Brooks quotes from Augustine's City of God and states that "self consciousness" was the "knowledge conferred by the act of plucking and eating the fated apple". Iqbal makes use of this argument to further his thesis of self-awareness.

Looking at the issue of the Fall from a Sufi perspective illustrates how Islamic anthropology and psychology are rooted in the divine attributes. A primary goal of the Sufis, after all, is to assume the character traits of God, or to actualize the divine form in which human beings were created. All the discussion of the "stations" that must be traversed on the path to God refer to the character traits that need to be brought out from latency. The models of the perfected divine form are the prophets, and the father of all the prophets is Adam himself. All the perfections, virtuous qualities, and stations that have come to be realized by human beings were already present in Adam. Understanding Adam's story allows us to see how the mutuality of divine and human love brings about the full flowering of human possibility and actualizes God's goal in creating the universe.

Since God is infinite, the possible modes in which the knowledge of His names can be realized are also infinite. This means that it is not enough for the first human being to know God's names. Each of his children must also know the names in his or her own unique way. Only then can every potential of the original human disposition come to be actualized. One implication of this is that hell demands human existence in the world. Hell is nothing but a domain that is ruled almost exclusively by the names of wrath and severity, just as paradise is ruled by the names of mercy and gentleness. The fact that God is both All-merciful and Wrathful demands that both paradise and hell exist. Hence, Aḥmad Samʿānī (died 1140) tells us, God addressed Adam as follows when He wanted to explain to him why He had to send him down out of paradise:75

> *Within the pot of your existence are shining jewels and jet-black stones. Hidden within the ocean of your makeup are pearls and potsherds. And as for Us, We have two houses: in one We spread out the dining-cloth of good-pleasure, entrusting it to [the angel] Riḍwān. In the other We light up the fire of wrath, entrusting it to [the angel] Malik. If We were to let you stay in the Garden, Our attribute of severity would not be satisfied. So, leave this place and go down into the furnace of affliction and the crucible of distance. Then We will bring out into the open the deposits, artifacts, subtleties, and tasks that are concealed in your heart.*

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Basit concludes, "As a final word I'd like to explicitly articulate this logic. The logic underpinning both of the approaches offered above with respect to the ultimate goal of Islam in its encounter with the modern West is not to critique-condemn-replace but to redeem-reform-embrace."...... "In the final analysis if there is one unredeemable part of the Enlightenment tradition it is the fact that it allowed its critique of illumination, wisdom and the Divine turns into an outright rejection because of the reification of the critique..... To adopt the position that the Enlightenment tradition has to be abandoned in its entirety in response to its shortcomings is to exhibit the worst characteristics of that which one is critiquing and rejecting. This basically means that one has adopted the same attitude towards the Enlightenment paradigm that the Enlightenment paradigm had adopted towards traditional religion and classical philosophy. This is not only a modernist move in the most negative sense, but also one that is unlikely to bear fruit. A more sane approach "albeit a more courageous, complex and nuanced one" and one that is built on scripturally (Qurʾānically) reasoned grounds is redeem-reform-embrace—an approach that will lead to enhanced understanding on the part of a troubled and alienated self, as a result of it critical but empathetic study of the alien other. (Basit, p. 26-28) While agreeing with him "to redeem-reform-embrace" I would offer the following remarks as my conclusion.

The view advocated by Basit could be termed as a Postmodernism, which in contrast to its deconstructive predecessor,[76] be called *constructive* or *revisionary*. It seeks to overcome the Modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a Postmodern worldview through a revision of Modern premises and traditional concepts. This constructive or revisionary Postmodernism involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions. It rejects not science as such but only that scientism in which the data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our worldview.

The constructive activity of this type of postmodern thought is not limited to a revised worldview; it is equally concerned with a postmodern world that will support and be supported by the new worldview. A postmodern world will involve postmodern persons, with a postmodern spirituality, on the one hand, and a postmodern society, ultimately a postmodern global order, on the other. Going beyond the modern world will involve transcending its individualism, anthropocentrism, patriarchy, mechanization, economism, consumerism, nationalism, and militarism. Constructive postmodern thought provides support for the ecology, peace, feminist, and other emancipatory movements of our time, while stressing that the inclusive emancipation must be from Modernity itself. It however, by contrast with *premodern,* emphasizes that the modern world has produced unparalleled advances that must not be lost in a general revulsion against its negative features.[77]

This revisionary postmodernism is not only more adequate to our experience but also more genuinely Postmodern. It does not simply carry the premises of Modernity through to their logical conclusions, but criticizes and revises those premises. Through its return to organicism and its acceptance of nonsensory perception, it opens itself to the recovery of truths and values from various forms of Premodern thought and practice that had been dogmatically rejected by Modernity. This constructive, revisionary Postmodernism involves a creative synthesis of Modern and Premodern truths and values.

But to work out such a creative synthesis is a challenging task. I would conclude with three reminders. First, finding Enlightenment thought useful to Islamic thought does not mean following it blindly or swallowing it uncritically. Neither in intention nor in result are they Islamic thinkers. Second, the kind of appropriation Basit is proposing is possible just to the degree that various postmodern critical analyses are conceptually separable from the secular, atheistic contexts in which they are to be found. Finally, I hope that by now it is clear the very thin soup one finds in Postmodernism is not the only piety that one could call "postmodern". Rather, some postmodern critiques open the door for a kind of Islamic thought that is robustly theistic and quite specifically Islamic. Perhaps one of the most important Islamic uses to which secular Enlightenment/Postmodernism can be put is to help contemporary Islamic thinkers sort the wheat from the tares in our own traditions. The Postmodern can lead back to the Premodern, or, more precisely, a critically appropriated Postmodernism can lead to a critical re-appropriation of Premodern resources.

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The characteristic features of this epoch very definitely correspond with the indications supplied from time immemorial by the traditional doctrines when describing the cyclic period of which it forms a part; and this will at the same time serve to show that what appears as anomalous and disorderly from a certain point of view is nevertheless a necessary element in a wider order and an inevitable consequence of the laws governing the development of all manifestation. However, let it be said forthwith, this is not a reason for consenting to submit passively to the confusion and obscurity which seem momentarily to be triumphing, for in such a case there would be nothing else to do but to remain silent; on the contrary, it is a reason for striving to the utmost to prepare the way of escape out of this "dark age ", for there are many signs that its end is approaching, if it be not immediately at hand. This eventuality also is in accordance with order, since equilibrium is the result of the simultaneous action of two contrary tendencies; if one or the other could entirely cease to function, equilibrium would never be restored and the world itself would disappear; but such a supposition cannot possibly be realized, for the two terms of an opposition have no meaning apart from one another, and whatever the appearances may be, one can rest assured that all partial and transitory disequilibrium's will finally contribute towards the realization of the total equilibrium itself.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Frithjof Schuon,

[2] Emphasis my own.

[3] David Ray Griffin has termed it "reversionary Postmodernism". See David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989.

[4] Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind,* Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000, pp. 133-142.

[5] For a representative narrative, elucidating the long standing position of definition, function and purpose of philosophy in Islam, see M. S. Umar, (Comp.), "*From the Niche of Prophecy*"– *Nasr's Position on Islamic Philosophy with in the Islamic Tradition*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2000.

[6] A quick overview of the course of philosophy would elucidate the point. I have selected Huston Smith to make the point for me. "If logic isn't philosophy's essence (Quine) and language isn't either (Davidson), the question "what essence remains?" cannot be avoided. We can argue over whether "essence" is the right word here, but let us come to the point. The deepest reason for the current crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason—reason without infusions that both power and vector it —is helpless. By itself, reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working (as it necessarily must) with variables, variables are all it can come up with. The Enlightenment's "natural light of reason" turns out to have been a myth. Reason is not itself a light. It is more like a transformer that does useful things but on condition that it is hitched to a generator.

[7] See Martin Lings, "Intellect and Reason" in *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, repr. (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1988, 57-68; F. Schuon, *Gnosis Divine Wisdom* London: J. Murray, 1978, 93-99; S. H. Nasr, "Knowledge and its Desacralization" in *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981, 1-64; Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 60-95.

Also see his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind,* Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000).

[8] See René Guenon, "Individualism" in *Crisis of the Modern World,* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1981, 51-65. Also see Social Chaos" in the same document.

[9] For a few representative writings that indicate this situation, see "Scientism, Pragmatism and the Fate of Philosophy, *Inquiry*, No. 29, p. 278, cf. Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, loc. cit. p. 142, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004; Hilary Putnam, "After Empiricism" in *Behaviorism*, 16:1 (Spring 1988); Alasdair MacIntrye, "Philosophy; Past Conflict and Future Direction," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Supplement to 16/1, (September 1987); also see *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 59 (1986), and Kenneth Baynes et al., *Philosophy: End or Transformation*? (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987).

[10] Huston Smith, "Crisis in Modern Philosophy", in *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind,* Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1990; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004, p. 137.

[11] Huston Smith has pointed towards the possibility of accepting these "infusions" from *Philosophia Perennis* or *Religio-Perennis,* the sapiential doctrines of mankind. See his "Two Traditions and Philosophy" in *Religion of the Heart– Essays Presented to Frithjof Schuon on his 80th Birthday,* (Washington, D.C.: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1991, 278-296. In this regard also see F. Schuon, "Tracing the Notion of Philosophy," *Sufism Veil and Quintessence* Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1985, 115-128; *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. Peter N. Townsend (New York: Harper and Row, 1975; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004. A similar awareness could be discerned in the arena of politics, humanities, and social sciences. The impasse, though with different implications, was reached by the parallel paradigm of autonomous politics and social sciences which had refused to accept any "infusion" from a higher domain.

[12] In this regard see the important debate between David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989.

[13] Emphasis my own.

[14] Emphasis my own.

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[15] I say so because that which the beyond-Postmodern theology calls "*prehensions*" is what comes closest to Tradition's "*intellection*".

[16] David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 62.

[17] I summarize it from Huston Smith, *Religion –Significance and Meaning in an Age of Disbelief*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002, pp. 11-22.

[18] For the present discussion I have left out the beyond-Postmodern paradigm and its conceptual shift.

[19] Which extended from human beginnings up to the rise of modern science.

[20] Which took over from there and continued through the first half of the twentieth century

[21] Which Nietzsche anticipated, but which waited for the second half of the twentieth century to take hold.

[22] It continues to be refined, but because modernity laid the foundations for the scientific understanding of it, it deserves credit for the discovery.

[23] The just entered distinction between cosmology and metaphysics is important here, so I shall expand it slightly. *Cosmology* is the study of the physical universe– or the world of nature as science conceives of it– and is the domain of science. *Metaphysics*, on the other hand, deals with all there is. (The terms *worldview* and *Big Picture* are used interchangeably with *metaphysics* in the present discussion.) In the worldview that holds that nature is all there is, metaphysics coincides with cosmology. That metaphysics is named *naturalism*.

[24] Generic science (which consists of careful attention to nature and its regularities) is as old as the hills– at least as old as art and religion.

[25] Some fifteen billion years ago an incredibly compact pellet of matter exploded to launch its components on a voyage that still continues. Differentiation set in as hydrogen proliferated into the periodic table. Atoms gathered into gaseous clouds. Stars condensed from whirling filaments of flame, and planets spun off from those to become molten drops that pulsated and grew rock-encrusted. Narrowing our gaze to the planet that was to become our home, we watch it grow, ocean-filmed and swathed in atmosphere. Some three and a half billion years ago shallow waters began to ferment with life, which could maintain its inner milieu through homeostasis and could reproduce itself. Life spread

from oceans across continents, and intelligence appeared. Several million years ago our ancestors arrived. It is difficult to say exactly when, for every few years palaeontologists announce discoveries that "set the human race back another million years or so," as press reports like to break the news.

[26] Our ancestors were impressive astronomers, and we can honour them unreservedly for how much they learned about nature with only their unaided senses to work with.

[27] Of Li Po, Wordsworth, and Thoreau.

[28] I need to support my contention that postmodern science does not measure up to modern physics in the scope of its discoveries. It says nothing against the brilliance of Stephen Hawking, Fred Hoyle, John Wheeler, Freeman Dyson, Steven Weinberg, and their likes to add that they have discovered nothing about nature that compares with the discoveries of Copernicus, Newton, Maxwell, Planck, Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr, Schrödinger, and Born. In molecular chemistry things are different. DNA is a staggering discovery, but– extending back only several billion years compared with the astrophysicists billions of *light* years– it does not pertain to nature's foundations. The fact that no new abstract idea in physics has emerged for seventy years may suggest that nothing more remains to be discovered about nature's foundations.

[29] The billions of dollars that have been spent since the middle of the twentieth century (and the millions of papers that have been written on theories that change back and forth) have produced no discoveries that impact human beings in important ways. All are in the domain of the meta-sciences of high-energy particle physics and astronomy, whose findings– what is supposed to have happened in the first 10-42 seconds of the universe's life, and the like– while headlined by the media have no conceivable connection to human life and can be neither falsified nor checked in normal ways. This allows the building blocks of nature– particles, strings, or whatever– to keep changing, and the age of the universe to be halved or doubled every now and then. Roughly 99.999 percent of science (scientist Rustum Roy's estimate) is unaffected by these flickering hypotheses, and the public does not much care about their fate.

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[30] According to this reading of the matter, when people claim that what they say is true, all they are really doing is claiming status for beliefs that advance their own social standing.

[31] The most widely used textbook on college campuses for the past thirty years has been Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and its thesis– that facts derive their meaning from the paradigms that set them in place– has shifted attention from scientific facts to scientific paradigms.

[32] We seldom confront it directly anymore; mostly it comes to us via supermarkets and cushioned by air-conditioning and central heating.

[33] Post colonial guilt may play a part here, and so much remains to be done that self-congratulation is premature.

[34] • In 1919 the Brooklyn Zoo exhibited an African American caged alongside chimpanzees and gorillas. Today such an act would be met with outrage anywhere in the world.

• The civil rights movement of the 1960s accomplished its major objectives. In the United States and even in South Africa today, people of different races mix where they never could before– on beaches, in airline cabin crews, everywhere.

• In the 1930s, if a streetcar in San Francisco approached a stop where only Chinese Americans were waiting to board, it would routinely pass them by. By contrast, when (fifty years later) I retired from teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, my highly respected chancellor was a Chinese American who spoke English with a Chinese accent.

• No war has ever been as vigorously protested as was the war in Vietnam by United States citizens. When things were going so badly that military leaders advised President Nixon to use nuclear weapons, he declined because (as he said) if he did that, he would face a nation that had taken to the streets.

• The women's movement is only a blink in the eyes of history, but it has already scored impressive victories. Until long after the Civil War, American women really had no civil rights, no legal rights, and no property rights. Not until 1918 did Texas alter its law that everyone had the right to vote except "idiots, imbeciles, aliens, the insane, and women."

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- Arguably, the most important theological development of the latter twentieth century was the emergence of the theology of liberation, with its Latin American and feminist versions in the vanguard.
- In an unprecedented move, in March 2000 the pope prayed to God to forgive the sins his church had committed against the people of Israel, against love, peace, and respect for cultures and religions, against the dignity of women and the unity of the human race, and against the fundamental rights of persons. Two months later, two hundred thousand Australians marched across Sydney Harbor Bridge to apologize for their treatment of the aborigines while the sky written word SORRY floated above the Sydney Opera House.

[35] Perhaps because for those institutions were considered to be God-given and unalterable. People regarded them in the way we regard laws of nature– as givens to be worked with, not criticized.

[36] David Hume is commonly credited with having the clearest head of all the great philosophers, but I (Huston Smith) read that somewhere in his correspondence (I have not been able to find the passage) he wrote that the worst white man is better than the best black man. What I can report firsthand is signs posted in parks of the international settlements in Shanghai, where I attended high school, that read, "No dogs or Chinese allowed." With a virgin continent to rape, the United States did not need colonies, but this did not keep it from hunting down the Native Americans, continuing the institution of slavery, annexing Puerto Rico and Hawaii, and establishing "protectorates" in the Philippines and several other places.

[37] When Carl Sagan opened his television series, *Cosmos*, by announcing that "the Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be," he presented that unargued assumption as if it were a scientific fact.

[38] In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean Francois Lyotard goes so far as to define postmodernism as "incredulity toward meta-narratives," a synonym for metaphysics. The incredulity takes three forms that grow increasingly shrill as they proceed. Postmodern minimalism contents itself with pointing out that we have no consensual worldview today; "we have no maps and don't know how to make them." Mainline Postmodernism adds, "and never again will we have a consensual worldview, such as prevailed in the Middle Ages, Elizabethan England, or seventeenth century New England; we now know too well how little

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the human mind can know." Hardcore Postmodernism carries this trajectory to its logical limit by adding, "good riddance!"

[39] See Huston Smith, *Religion– Significance and Meaning in an Age of Disbelief*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002; Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth, The Common Vision of the World's Religions,* Harper San Francisco, San Francisco: 1992 (repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1984, 2002). Also see his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind,* Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989 (repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2002).

[40] This is of particular interest at the moment because currently science does the same. Dark matter doesn't impact any of science's detectors, and the current recipe for the universe is "70 parts cold dark matter, about 30 parts hot dark matter, and just a pinch for all the rest the matter detectable to scientific instruments." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 October 1992, A 16.)

[41] Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 59. Ernst Cassirer corroborates Lovejoy on this point: "The most important legacy of ancient speculation was the concept and general picture of a graduated cosmos" (*Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 9).

[42] Ken Wilber, "The Great Chain of Being," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 33 no. 3 (summer 1993), p. 53.

[43] That this runs counter to social science functionalism, which holds that institutions don't survive unless they serve social needs, is conveniently overlooked, but the deeper point is that the vertical dimension– the way religion feeds the human soul in its inwardness and solitude– gets little attention.

[44] For details see Huston Smith, "Postmodernism and the World's Religions", in this issue.

[45] Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference— How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London & New York, 2002)

[46] To prove my point I invite the readers to have a look at a few of the following works. Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence,* trans. Peter N. Townsend (New York: Harper and Row, 1975; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004; S. H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*; Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind,* Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000; Huston Smith, *Why*

Religion Matters? Harper and Row, 2002; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004 (as *Religion –Significance and Meaning in an Age of Disbelief);* David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989; Titus Burckhardt, *Mirror of the Intellect*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004. The Perennialists are, after all, not that bad either.

[47] The criticisms we have in mind are well represented by the books cited by Lawrence E. Sullivan in his masterly study, *Icanchus Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 884-85. What he says in the passage leading up to the suggested reading applies also to Western perceptions of Islam: “One of the great disservices to our understanding of South American religions [read: Islam] has been the perception of tribal peoples [read: Muslims) as slavishly dedicated to an unchanging order revealed in the images of myth and handed down unquestioned and unmodified from one generation to the next.

This attitude accompanies the evaluation of ‘myth’ as a banal and inane narrative. Tribal peoples (representing ‘archaic’ modes of thought) childishly cling to their myths, infantile fantasies, whereas mature contemporaries jettison myths with the passage of ‘historical time’ and the entrance’ into ‘modernity.’ It would be fascinating to study these and other justifications proffered for avoiding a serious encounter with the reality of myth [read: Islamic thought) and symbolic acts.... This is not the place to carry out a history of the ‘modern’ ideas of myth and religion. It is enough to suggest that the Western cultural imagination turned away when it encountered the stunning variety of cultural worlds that appeared for the first time in the Age of Discovery. Doubtless this inward turn sparked the appearance of all sorts of imaginary realities. The Enlightenment, the withdrawal of Western thinkers from the whirling world of cultural values into an utterly imaginary world of ‘objective’ forms of knowledge, and its intellectual follow-up coined new symbolic currency. These terms brought new meanings and new self-definition to Western culture: ‘consciousness/ unconsciousness,’ ‘primitive/civilized,’ ‘ethics/ mores,’ ‘law/ custom,’ ‘critical or reflective thought/ action.’

[48] David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. xi.

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[49] S. H. Nasr, "Introduction," *Islamic Life and Thought*, Unwin, London, 1976; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2001, pp. 161-176.

[50] David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology*, State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 81.

[51] St. Mark, XII, 30. In Deuteronomy VI, 5, to which this is a reference, the element 'mind' is not mentioned, which makes no fundamental difference since the mind is strictly speaking a psychic faculty, and is therefore implicit in the word 'soul'. In St. Matthew, XXII, 37, on the other hand, the element 'strength' is absent which again makes no difference inasmuch as physical energy and endurance are dominated by the will, which is also a psychic faculty.

[52] S. H. Nasr, O' Brian, (Eds.) "Islamic Science, Western Science–Common Heritage, Diverse Destinies" in *In Quest of the Sacred*, repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2001, pp. 161-176.

[53] Which is, as if, a reflection of the Intellect on the mental plane.

[54] In the words of Rumi, "*'aql i juz'ī 'aql rā badnām kard", Mathnawī*, (ed. Nicholson) Vol. III, p. 31, line, 8. Also see Vol. II, p. 352, line, 11, Vol. I, p. 130, line, 4.

[55] Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* Iqbal Academy Pakistan/Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1989, p. 13.

[56] *Ibid.* p. 14.

[57] *Ibid.* p. 37.

[58] *Ibid.* p. 146.

[59] How do these "other ways of invasion "relate to poetry"? Iqbal tells us that the questions that call for an intellectual vision of reality for their answers are, "common to religion, philosophy and higher poetry". His complete statement reads as follows. "What is the character and general structure of the universe in which we live? Is there a permanent element in the constitution of this universe? How are we related to it? What place do we occupy in it, and what is the kind of conduct that befits the place we occupy? These are the questions that are common to religion, philosophy and higher poetry. But the kind of knowledge that poetic inspiration brings is essentially individual in its character; it is figurative, vague and indefinite. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* op. cit. p. 1.

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[60] For a powerful argument showing the intimate links between reason and the dissolution of human values in the modern world, see John Ralston Saul, *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reasoning the West* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

[61] Karen Armstrong, *A History of God,* Mandarin, 1993, pp. 352.

[62] *Philosophical Dictionary* (tr. T. Besterman) London, London, 1972, p. 57.

[63] Frithjof Schuon, Dimensions of Islam, Unwin, 1969; repr. Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1985, p. 76.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Emphasis added.

[66] This is the essence of Basit's thesis in both of its negative and positive aspects.

[67] See note 13 above.

[68] See David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology,* State University of New York Press, 1989. p. 49.

[69] See Basit B. Koshal, "Ghazzali, Ibn Rushd and Islam's Sojourn into Modernity: A Comparative Analysis." *Islamic Studies.* Summer, 2004. Also see, S. H. Nasr, "Falsafey ka Mukhaalif Falasafi" (*Ghazzali– A Philosopher's Critique of Philosophy*), *Iqbaliyat,* IAP, 1987, p. 126, 128

[70] Bible I Cor. 13. 12.

[71] Human life unfolds on three planes simultaneously, or rather, the *ego is* subject to three centres of attraction to which it responds in different ways, according to its own nature or value. We live at the same time in the body, the head and the heart, so that we may sometimes ask ourselves where the genuine is situated; in fact, the *ego,* properly speaking, the empirical 'I', has its sensory seat in the brain, but it gravitates towards the body and tends to identify itself with it, while the heart is symbolically the seat of the Self, of which we may be conscious or ignorant, but which is our true existential, intellectual, and so universal centre. It is, in a sense, the old triad *anima, animus, Spiritus,* with the difference however that *anima—the* 'spouse' of *animus—is* rather the vegetative and animal psychic entity than the body itself; but there is no clear line of demarcation here, since the body cannot be dissociated from its sensations, which in fact constitute our lower and de-centralized *ego,* with its downward drag and dispersive tendency.

The brain is to the body what the heart is to brain and body taken together. The body and the brain are as it were projected into the current of forms; the heart is as it were immersed in the immutability of Being. Body and brain are so to speak the heart exteriorized; their bipolarization is explained by the fact of their exteriorization.

[72] Karen Armstrong, *A History of God,* Mandarin, 1993, pp. 352. "Coercing people to believe in orthodox doctrines seemed particularly appalling to an age increasingly enamoured of liberty and freedom of conscience. The bloodbath unleashed by the Reformation and its aftermath seemed the final straw. Reason seemed the answer. Yet could a God drained of the mystery that had for centuries made him an effective religious value in other traditions appeal to the more imaginative and intuitive Christians? The Puritan poet John Milton (1608–74) was particularly disturbed by the Church's record of intolerance. A true man of his age, he had attempted, in his unpublished treatise On Christian Doctrine, to reform the Reformation and to work out a religious creed for himself that did not rely upon the beliefs and judgments of others. He was also doubtful about such traditional doctrines as the Trinity. Yet it is significant that the true hero of his masterpiece *Paradise Lost* is Satan rather than the God whose actions he intended to justify to man. Satan has many of the qualities of the new men of Europe: he defies authority, pits himself against the unknown and in his intrepid journeys from Hell, through Chaos to the newly-created earth, he becomes the first explorer. Milton's God, however, seems to bring out the inherent absurdity of Western literalism. Without the mystical understanding of the Trinity, the position of the Son is highly ambiguous in the poem. It is by no means clear whether he is a second divine being or a creature similar to, though of higher status than, the angels. At all events, he and the Father arc two entirely separate beings who have to engage in lengthy conversations of deep tedium to find out each other's intentions, even though the Son is the acknowledged Word and Wisdom of the Father.

It is, however, Milton's treatment of God's foreknowledge of events on earth that makes his deity incredible. Since of necessity God already knows that Adam and Eve will fail– even before Satan has reached the earth– he has to engage in some pretty specious justification of his actions before the event. He would have no pleasure in enforced obedience, he explains to the Son, and he had given Adam and Eve the ability to withstand Satan. Therefore they could not, God argues defensively, justly accuse

Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate;
As if Predestination over-rul'd
Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Thir on revolt; not I: if I foreknew,
Fereknowledge had no influence on thir fault,
Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown .. .

I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree Unchangeable,
Eternal, which ordaind
Thir freedom; they themselves ordaind that fall.

Not only is it difficult to respect this shoddy thinking but God comes over as callous, self-righteous and entirely lacking in the compassion that his religion was supposed to inspire. Forcing God to speak and think like one of us in this way shows the inadequacies of such anthropomorphic and personalistic conception of the divine. There are too many contradictions for such a God to be either coherent or worthy of veneration.

The literal understanding of such doctrines as the omniscience of God will not work. Not only is Milton's God cold and legalistic, he is also grossly incompetent. In the last two books of *Paradise Lost*, God sends the Archangel Michael to console Adam for his sin by showing him how his descendants will be redeemed. The whole course of salvation history is revealed to Adam in a series of tableaux, with a cinnebtary by Michael: he sees the murder of Abel by Cain, the Flosland and Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel, the call of Abrahem, the Exocus from Egypt and the giving of the Law on Sinai. The inad quay of the Torah, which oppressed God's unfortunate chosen people tar countries, is, Michael explains, a ploy to make them yearn for a more spiritual law. As this account of the future salvation of the world progresses– through the exploits of King David, the exile to Babylon, the birth of Christ and so forth– it occurs to the reader that there must have been an easier and more direct way to redeem mankind. The fact that this tortuous plan with its constant failures and false starts, is decreed in advance can only cast grave doubts on the intelligence of its Author. Milton's God can inspire little confidence. It must be significant that after *Paradise Lost* no other major English creative writer would attempt to describe' the supernatural world. There would be no more Spensers or Miltons. Henceforth the supernatural and the spiritual would become the domain of more marginal writers, such as George MacDonald and C. S. Lewis. Yet a God who cannot appeal to the imagination is in trouble.

At the very end of *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve take their solitary way out of the Garden of Eden and into the world. In the West too, Christians were on the threshold of a more secular age, though they still adhered to belief in God. The new religion of reason would be known as Deism. It had no time for the imaginative disciplines of mysticism and mythology. It turned its back on the myth of revelation and on such traditional 'mysteries' as the Trinity, which had for so long held people in the thrall of superstition. Instead it declared allegiance to the impersonal 'Deus' which man could discover by his own efforts. Francois-Marie de Voltaire, the embodiment of the movement that would subsequently become known as the Enlightenment, defined this ideal religion in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764). It would, above all, be as simple as possible.

> Would it not be that which taught much morality and very little dogma? that which tended to make men just without making them absurd? that which did not order one to believe in things that are impossible, contradictory, injurious to divinity, and panicious to mankind, and which dared not menace with eternal punishment anyone possessing common sense? Would it not be that which did not uphold its belief with executioners, and did not inundate the earth with blood on account of unintelligible sophism? . . . which taught only the worship of one god, justice, tolerance and humanity?

[73] Martin Lings, *The Secret of Shakespeare,* Quinta Essentia, England, 1996, p. 178.

[74] For a perceptive analysis of the subject see, S. R. Farooqi, "The Image of Satan in Iqbal and Milton".

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[75] For a detailed account of the Sufi hermeneutics of the issue see W. C. Chittick, "The Fall of Adam", *Sufism– A Short Introduction,* One World, Oxford, 2000.

[76] Prone to assume that maps must be believed fanatically if they are to be believed at all, polemical Postmoderns condemn religions for fomenting disharmony. But it is useful here to refer back to a characteristic of post-modernity, which includes its being "paired with ethno-religious fundamentalism". Postmoderns over-look that pairing. They do not perceive the extent to which their styles of thought (with the dangers of relativism and nihilism they conceal) have produced fundamentalism; which fundamentalism is the breeding ground for the fanaticism and intolerance they rightly deplore.

[77] From the point of view of deconstructive postmodernists, this constructive postmodernism is still hopelessly wedded to outdated concepts, because it wishes to salvage a positive meaning not only for the notions of the human self, historical meaning, and truth as correspondence, which were central to modernity, but also for Premodern notions of a divine reality, cosmic meaning, and an enchanted nature.

ISLAM AS OUR OTHER: ISLAM AS OURSELF

Steven Kepnes

In my talk to today I will argue that Islam, as the third monotheistic religion, shares a dual identity as both other and same to Judaism, to Christianity and to the Christian West. This ambiguous position calls forth the ambiguous emotions of sibling rivalry but also promises the possibility of brotherly and sisterly love. From the point of view of scripture, which is my point of entry into any theological discussion, Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity not only a devotion to the one God, to the goodness of creation, and the dream of a future time of judgment and peace, but the very basic principle that revelation is given in scripture. We are all people of the book in this sense and though our books are different we share common narratives, common prophets, and common hermeneutical principles to guide us in the interpretation of scripture. And this gives us, despite all differences, a common starting ground for discussion of the issues that both divide and unite us.

For my reflections today on the simultaneous otherness and sameness of Islam to Judaism and Christianity, I have chosen the Hebrew Scriptures that speak of the figures of Hagar and Ishmael. I begin with my own texts because I must begin with what I know and where I stand. I must admit that I began my scriptural reasoning on Hagar and Ishmael with a worry that it may not be the appropriate place to start, since the Jewish tradition is fairly negative about these figures. Yet as I reread the stories I was taken in by the spiritual insights and depth of the character of Hagar. And I recalled a point made by the modern Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, which I take to be most instructive in doing scriptural reasoning. Buber argues that the Torah should be viewed, not as an objective history of world creation and redemption, but as a story of the relation of God to Israel that is told primarily from the perspective of the people of Israel.[1] It certainly moves out from Israel to attempt to embrace the entire world, but its starting point is a small family that wanders from some where in ancient Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan and comes to see itself as bearing a world historic message. This means that the Torah is at once a particularistic and universal document. I could put this somewhat differently and say that the Torah is both an ethnocentric and theocentric document. From the ethnocentric perspective of Israel, Hagar may be a mere slave girl and Ishmael a wild ass of a man and thorn in the side of Israel, but from the perspective of the larger narrative of the Bible and from the perspective of God, Hagar and Ishmael have a unique role in God's design.

Also, although some might be put off by Hagar's status as a lowly slave girl. This fact actually unites her to Jewish and Christian origins. For the children of Israel trace their origins to their status as Egyptian slaves who were freed by God and Christians find their origins in the death of a lowly carpenter who suffered the criminal's death of crucifixion.

Yet in addition to these rough analogies to overarching concepts, the use of scripture, and lowly origins, the stronger point I wish to make, is that the presence of the figures of Hagar and Ishmael in scripture embeds the Muslim people in the Torah of the Jews and the Old Testament of the Christians. Hagar is at once the other who comes from Egypt, the land of exile and slavery, and the wife of the patriarch Abraham through whom all the peoples of the world will be blessed. Hagar is at once the surrogate womb for Sarah to exploit, and the second wife of Abraham and mother of his first son. The most obvious implication of this to me is that although Islam is often presented as the other to Judaism and Christianity and to the strange fiction called the "Judeo-Christian Tradition," Hagar and Ishmael's presence in those very scriptures is a warrant for Jews and Christians to take Islam seriously not only as the third monotheism but as a tradition that is rooted in Genesis and whose origin and destiny is intertwined with Israel. If Islam is rooted in the Hebrew scriptures what this opens up is a new possibility to see Islam as not opposed to the Judeo-Christian tradition of Monotheism but, indeed a part of it. Through Hagar and Ishmael, Islam regains its place as simultaneously the first child of Abraham and the third stage in the development of Monotheism. What this means is that we have a warrant in the revealed texts of Judaism and Christianity to engage with Muslims not as strange others but as long lost members of the great family whose destiny is to be a light of truth and healing to all the nations of the world. Thus, the greatest significance of scriptural reasoning is that it is beginning to see the advent of a new religious consciousness that recognizes that there is not just a Judeo-Christian tradition but a Jewish-Christian-Islamic reality.

With this as an introduction I will move now to scripture.

> GENESIS 16
>
> *7 The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her." 10 The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." 11 And the angel of the Lord*

> *said to her, "Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin." 13 So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are El-roi"; for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?" 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.*

The first thing to note in these verses is that we have the first appearance of an angel in biblical literature and the first time that God speaks to a woman. Thus, though a slave-girl, Hagar merits particular interest on the part of God. God sends a messenger to her, the messenger finds her in the middle of a journey back to Egypt (as Shur is close to Egypt Gen 25:13), and he finds her by a well. Well scenes are replete throughout the Genesis narrative and thus we call the visits of Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca, even Joseph to wells at crucial points in their lives. The angel asks a highly loaded question, "Where have you come from and where are you going?" Clearly the angel knows where Hagar comes from. So this question must be asked more for Hagar's sake then for the angel's. This is the type of question that is only asked of biblical characters of significance, Adam, Cain, Abraham. Elijah, Jonah. It is an existential question that seeks out a person's integrity and ability to respond and to take responsibility. It is a kind of trick question or question of testing that biblical figures often fail. Hagar's answer however, is straight forward, honest, unequivocal, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." Apparently, Hagar passes the test but his leads to a seemingly cruel command that she return and submit, or literally "place herself under her mistress's hand." Given that biblical law demands that one help a run-away slave escape, this is, indeed, a strange command. We can either view it as an expression of the cruelty of slavery, of abusive patriarchy and divine tyranny or search in it for another level of meaning. If, indeed, I am correct, that the first question, "where have you come from..."

is a test, then the command that follows my be interpreted as a deeper more difficult test. Hagar, must return to Sarah and submit to her. Although the Hebrew *hitani* appears to have no relation to the Arabic word to submit, am I stretching to far to find an intimation to the command all Muslim's, indeed all Jews and Christians, have to submit to the will of God? The supposition however, that God wishes Hagar no ill and, indeed, has a special mission for her is born out in the next lines. "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude." Nahum Sarna notes that the messenger uses a rhetorical form that signifies "the birth and destiny of one who is given a special role in God's design of history (cf. Gen 25:23 and Judges 13:3)."[2] It is easy to see connections between Hagar and the first women, Eve. The Hebrew *harbeh arbeh* "I will greatly multiply..." is the same phrase that God uses in the curse of Eve, in greatly multiplying Eve's pain in childbirth. Yet, the consequence of result of Hagar's suffering is that she will be abundantly rewarded with multitudes of descendents. Thus, unlike Eve, Hagar is blessed and not cursed. Since Hagar flees Sarah's home in Canaan, heads for Egypt and then returns to Canaan, her journey reminds us of Abraham's journeys. Like Abraham, Hagar is a wanderer who comes to hear the word of call and fulfil a divine mission.

Tikvah Frymer -Kensky reminds us that the verses that describe Hagar fleeing the home of Sarah and travelling toward Egypt occur right after God has told Abraham in 15:13 that his offspring will be enslaved in Egypt.[3]

> ***Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be strangers [Ger iyeh zarha] in a land that is not theirs and they shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years, but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.***

It is startling when we realize that the word used to describe Israel in Egypt is *Ger. Ger iyeh zarha*, "strangers shall your offspring be." Thus, God tells Abraham in chapter 15, that his offspring will be literally be *Gerim*. And in the next chapter we meet Hagar, *Ha-Ger*, the Egyptian stranger. Frymer-Kensky makes the point obvious, Hagar, the stranger, Hagar the servant, Hagar, wife of Abraham and mother of Ishmael *is* Israel! She presages, she prefigures, Israel's suffering in Egypt. And in her deep connection to God, and in the fact that God sees and listens to her suffering and rewards her with a multitude of offspring, Hagar also prefigures Israel's ultimate redemption!

But now we must pause to reflect on Ishmael and who he is. First, we have his wonderful name which means "God hears." Our verses connect the hearing to God attending to Hagar's suffering.

> ***for the Lord has given heed to your affliction." But later in verse 21:17 a connection is made to God's hearing the voice of Ishmael. "And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is' (21:17)."***

In 16:15, Abraham gives Hagar's son the name Ishmael, fulfilling the divine directive and also legitimizing Ishmael as his son.[4] Ishmael clearly has a name that suggests that God hears and will attend to his voice; and thus the Torah seems to recognize and underscore that Ishmael and his offspring will maintain a special relationship to God and that God will continue to hear the voice of Ishmael wherever he is!

In this context, it is somewhat difficult to understand the second part of the description of Ishmael in verse 12. "He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin." I have previously described this as the view of Ishmael from the perspective of Israel, which highlights the tension between the descendents of Ishmael and the descendents of Isaac. It is thus not necessarily some deep description of the eternal nature of Ishmael and his descendents. It is noteworthy that the recent Jewish Publication Society version of the last part of verse "*al penai kol echav ishkan*" translates it not as "he shall live at odds with" but, "He shall dwell alongside all his kinsmen." This stresses the intricate relationship between the descendents of Ishmael and the descendents of Isaac without the eternal state of conflict.[5] It is further interesting that the description of Ishmael in the later chapter 21 describes him in less contentious terms. "God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt. (21: 20-21)

If we leave Ishmael and return to the fascinating figure of Hagar. We have to comment on the fact she names God and furthermore is the only figure, male or female, in the Bible to do this! "So she named the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are El-roi'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?'" 16:13. This expression seems to give witness not only to God seeing into the very soul of Hagar, and her passing this test, but to Hagar's own ability to see God! It is remarkable that after God names Ishmael, Hagar names God, and the Hebrew expression used in both these occasions are similar. Thus "*Korat Shmo Ismael*," "you shall call him Ishmael"...is followed by "*v'tikrah shem Adonai*," "And She called God..." The Hebrew expression *v'tikrah shem Adonai* also calls to mind a different use of the phrase by Abraham in Genesis 13:13. Here we also have v-*ikrah bshem adonai.* This is generally rendered in English "and Abraham called on or called out the name of God." However, the Talmud interprets this to mean that Abraham was fulfilling his prophetic role and publicizing the revelation of the oneness of God throughout the world. Could it be that Hagar was not just speaking to herself when he called out God's name, but also wished to publicize her revelation of God as one who sees into the essence of humanity and one who sees the suffering of humanity and responds to it? If this were true, Hagar would be a counterpart to Abraham as another evangelist of the One God.

After Abraham dies, we hear nothing more about Hagar except that a hint of her and what she represents seems to live on in the Torah. This hint is found in the countless references to Ha-ger to the stranger and how Israel is to treat the stranger. The notion of the Ger occurs no less than thirty-six times in the Torah and is connected with the commandment to treat the stranger as one of Israel. The nineteenth century German Jewish philosopher, Hermann Cohen, argues that the development of the notion of the "*Ger*" in the Torah represents one of the most significant events in the history of all of monotheism. Cohen tells us that the *Ger* is a "great step with which humanitarianism begins."[6] The power of this notion can be clearly seen in two texts of the Torah. "One law shall be unto him that is home-born and unto the *Ger*, the stranger that lives among you (Ex 12:49) (cf. Num 15.15, Lev 24.22, Deut 1.16)." "Thou shall love the Ger, the stranger as yourself (Lev 19:33)."

Cohen tells us that what is remarkable about the notion of the *Ger* is that it achieves its development as monotheism is codified in law and given political expression in the nation. Thus, the notion of the *Ger* is not developed as an afterthought, but comes immediately with the formation of Israel. Here, under the commandment of the Torah, the stranger must be treated equally, even though he is not a member of the house of Israel.

In the holiness code of Leviticus, the principle of the *Ger* as fellowman is intensified to the commandment of love. "You shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19.33). Where Kantian ethics develops the responsibility of the self for others on the basis of a universal rational law, the categorical imperative, and the recognition a fundamental moral duty, Cohen recognizes that humans are not motivated by reason and duty alone. In turning to Leviticus, Cohen follows the lead of the Torah to add the emotions of love and compassion to the ethical relation. "Religion achieves what morality fails to achieve. Love for man is brought forth"[7] The Torah accomplishes this achievement on the basis of Israel's own experience of slavery. Israel should be able to identify with the stranger and love her because she too went through the experience of being a stranger when she was in Egypt.[8]

II

I hope that I have convinced you of the power of the figures of Hagar and Ishmael in the Torah of the Jews and the Old Testament of Christians. I have argued that far from being "the other" these figures are part of the very fabric that ties the people of Israel to God. Having walked you through a short exercise in scriptural reasoning with the Torah I would like now to speak a little more about the power of scripture in general and the power of the three particular scriptures of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This will allow me to say a few things about the promise of the movement called scriptural reasoning which I and a number of our panellists are a part. In speaking about scriptural reasoning, one of my central tasks will be to distinguish it from Western philosophic reasoning.

One of the wonders of scripture that I discovered again in my research into Hagar and Ishmael is that scripture is not beholden to modern secular standards of narrative, historical and philosophic coherence. These standards might demand that Hagar and Ishmael, as minor figures in the story of Israel, be painted in wholly negative terms or be excised from the narrative after they have filled their functions as foils to Sarah and Isaac. Yet, we see that after these figures are introduced in Genesis 16 and 21 they are not erased but they appear again. Thus, seemingly out of the blue, Ishmael appears in chapter 25:9 to bury his father Abraham alongside Isaac. The burial site is not just any place but the cave of Machpelah, where Sarah was also buried. Scripture then tells us that Isaac settled near

Beer-lahai-roi, the place where God revealed himself to Hagar! The fact that Isaac settles here clearly ties him to Hagar. After being informed of this, we then are given a long list of the genealogy of Ishmael (25:12). Narrative coherence might demand that this information on Ishmael be left out. Or, rather, if Hagar and Ishmael were truly enemies of Israel, coherence might demand that they be painted in consistent negative portraits. Yet, what we find is a far more complex portrait of these figures. As I have shown, Hagar is a counterpart of Abraham in prophetic sight, she is a positive counterpart to Eve, and her wandering, suffering, and blessing are counterparts to Israel's slavery and redemption. Similarly, Ishmael might be a wild ass of a man but then, in the end, he shows up as a dutiful son to his father and brother to Isaac at Abraham's burial.

We may say that this treatment of the other as both different and same, foe and friend is unique to the Jewish scriptures. But if we move to the New Testament, we see an equally ambivalent portrait of the most clear and obvious other to the Christian, the Jew. On the one hand, we have the portrait of the Jews as hypocrites, Christ killers, stubborn sinners doomed to Hell, and on the other hand the Jews carry the law that Christ fulfils without abrogating. The Jews represent the trunk of the tree onto which Christians are grafted. And most importantly, the scriptures of the Jews, despite many attempts to sever their connection to Christianity, are tenaciously maintained, preserved, and even revered as part of Christian scriptures, as the Old Testament.

Holding on to the Jewish scriptures as Christian scripture simply put, is not easy. Certainly, from the standpoint of narrative and logical coherence it doesn't really work. To pull it off, Christianity must develop a complex, self-contradictory hermeneutic which says at once that Jewish scripture is revealed and wrong. Its way of Torah, its way of the law, is both necessary and superseded. Its promise to the children of Abraham both nullified and fulfilled.

Muslims may look over the shoulders at Christians and see this as strange, but they must admit that they have a similar ambivalence about their older monotheistic brothers and sisters. On the one hand, Muhammad is the final seal, the last prophet, the one who corrects what was wrong in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. On the other hand, the Qur'an, in its infinite mercy and openness, recognizes Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and many others as prophets. And the Qur'an preserves many of the narratives of the Jewish and Christian scripture and it praises the people of the book as righteous children of Abraham. There is no question that there are highly negative statements about the Jews and the Christians in the Qur'an, but if we remember Buber's insight that scripture is at least partially written from the perspective of one people in an attempt to understand their unique relation to God, we can understand why non-Muslims are presented, at times, in a negative light. Yet, if I may return to my original point about scripture, one of its truly wondrous aspects is that it neither thoroughly demonize the other nor does it leave their narratives out. On the contrary, it preserves the memories and stories of the others and says, in fundamental ways, that these other are related to us. These others, indeed, are us! Thus we read in the Qur'an Surah 2:62.

> *The believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians—whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does what is good shall receive their reward from their Lord. They shall have nothing to fear and they shall not grieve.*

And in Surah 2:135-36

> *We follow the religion of Abraham who was no polytheist.*
>
> *We believe in Allah, in what has been revealed to us, what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and in what was imparted to Moses, Jesus, making no distinction between any of them.*

And finally, in Surah 3:1-3

> *Allah, There is no God but He, the Living, the Everlasting.*

He revealed the Book to you in truth, confirming what came before it **And He has revealed the Torah and the Gospel.**

Our dear friend Peter Ochs likes to say that if we look at the logical pattern of modern Western philosophy and the modern culture which it reflects, we are offered a way of thinking that follows a logic of dichotomies. One the one hand, we have secularists on the other religious fundamentalist; on the other hand, we have the progressive West and the other backward Islam. On the one hand, we have modernity, on the other tradition. Light/ dark, Spirit/matter, male/female, same/other, us/them, yes/no, 0/1, these are the binaries that define our thinking and our world.

However, in the face of this logic, scripture offers us another way of thinking. Ochs calls it, following Peirce, a logic of relations. In this logic the binary pairs are placed in dialogue. To paraphrase the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, scripture places the isolated elements, God, World and Human in fundamental relations. Scripture offers us concepts of connectedness: creation, revelation, covenant, redemption. It offers us figures of mediation, Adam, Abraham, Hagar, Jesus and Muhammad. These figures are given to fill the gap between us and them, between God and human and between human and human.

This is not to say that scripture is innocent and pure, divorced from dichotomies of spirit and matter, saved and damned us and them. Indeed, if we look, we can find ample examples of these oppositions. But, the point is that scripture cannot be adequately and fully define by these dichotomies. Rather, a closer look reveals, in almost every page of the Torah, the New Testament and the Qur'an, elements and figures that lie outside of neat dichotomies and divisions. Scripture is filled with lacunae, gaps, inconsistencies and mysterious sayings, images, and parables that defy simple logic. Scripture, again in the words of Ochs, is "vague," its meaning unclear and hidden.

Because of the fundamental vagueness of scripture, the reader is called upon, indeed, required to interpret the text.

Unlike a mathematical formula, or a simple sign like a traffic light, scripture does not yield clear, distinct, univocal meanings. Scripture, instead, is an opaque semiotic system whose meaning is fulfilled in its interpretation by us. This is another way of pointing to the logic of relations of scripture. Its meaning is only given in relation to the interpreter or community of interpreters that receives it. In Hebrew, the Torah is often called the *Miqra* which means a calling out. Thus, the Torah is a system of signs that calls out, it calls out to those who listen for it and truly hear it. But we could also reverse the line of communication and say that the cry does not only come from scripture, but that it comes from humans who cry out in their need and suffering. As a conduit of communication between God and humans, scripture itself is a form of mediation, a vessel that bridges the gaps in material and spiritual life. As a conduit for divine communication, scripture is an agent of healing, redemption, even salvation.

Now if my description of the logic of relations in scripture is correct, we should not be shy and bringing our voice and cries of the twenty-first century to it. I have already spoken of the dichotomizing logic of the modern world and I have, at least, intimated that scripture may give us a vision and a way to heal that logic. But I want to go even further and suggest that scripture holds within it additional spiritual resources that may help us to address the suffering in our existential and historical world today.

Certainly, the problem that plagues contemporary Jews, Christians, and Muslims today is the problem of distrust, hatred, and misunderstanding between us. One of the great blessings and also curses of the modern world is that the world seems to have shrunk. You know the movie "Honey I shrunk the kids!" Well, modern world leaders could easily adopt this and say, "Honey, we shrank the world!" What this means is that we no longer have the luxury of Hagar to run away into the wilderness where we can be alone and isolated from each other. Where Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the pre-modern world could pretty much keep to themselves, we, like Ishmael and Isaac, must live next to each other. And like Ishmael and Isaac, we can either live against each other or alongside each other. Certainly, our scriptures offer us ammunition to oppose one another and even kill one another. But it also offers us alternative avenues of mediation, conciliation, and peaceful co-existence.

As well as offering us a logic of dichotomies, modernity, to be fair to it, did and still does offer us another way to solve the problem of many different people, with different cultures, living in an increasingly smaller world. This is the route of universal principles, universal rights of men, a universal economic order, and a universal global culture. The universalizing move of modernity flips all the dichotomies vertically and subsumes the bottom element into the top. Thus, the other is subsumed into the same, "them" is subsumed into "us," tradition is subsumed into modernity, religion into secularism, East into West, etc., etc.

Although this modern solution has had some success, it has also led to great suffering throughout the world as people see their traditional cultures, local customs, belief in God-- which are constructed to preserve human dignity and ethical relations between communal members-- dissolving in the solvent of modern universalisms. Certainly, part of the supposed battle between secularism and fundamentalism and between the modern West and Islam is a reaction to the relentless onslaught of a modern universalism which would wash away all particularism in the tidal wave of a global culture. Here again, I believe that scriptural reasoning can be an aid. Although, some have argued that monotheism represents the first great attempt at an imperialistic and universalistic world culture, the record from the scriptures suggests something else. If I follow Buber's logic and assert that three scriptures offer a mixture of particularism and universalism, the Torah singles out Abraham, but he is told that "all the nations of the world will be blessed through you." Before Abraham, Noah, a non-Israelite, is called "righteous" and before him Adam, the first human who represents all humans, is created in the image of God. The Tower of Babel story clearly favours a diversity of peoples and languages as it suggests that the attempt to have one language, and one culture, is counter to God's will. I have given only hints to parallel attempts in the New Testament and Qur'an to negotiate particularity and universalism and to provide resources for conciliation between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. I will leave it to others to expand on these resources and close by returning to Hagar and Ishmael and then say some final words about what the study of Islamic texts has meant to scriptural reasoning.

What I especially like about the Hagar and Ishmael narratives in the Torah is that the differences between Sarah and Hagar and Isaac and Ishmael are neither overlooked nor dissolved. The tension and conflict between then is neither denied nor obscured. Instead difference, tension, conflict is acknowledged and strategies and models for conciliation and coexistence offered. This conciliation and coexistence is offered not on the basis of some universal principle, or abstract declaration of human unity, but, instead on the basis of a shared sense of the oneness of God.

Hagar may be a servant and stranger, but she also is a woman, who suffers, wanders, fears, perseveres until she sees God. Ishmael, whose name means "God hears", may be the son of a surrogate mother, who is unloved by his father's wife and tossed under a bush to die, but he also knows how to cry out to God and is heard by God. Hagar and Ishmael may be others to Israel, but in their suffering and redemption Hagar and Ishmael also represent Israel. And in their spiritual search they recall the "suffering servants" of the Lord who even go beyond Israel to represent the spiritual struggle of all human beings.

The movement of scriptural reasoning began over a dozen years ago as a group of Jewish philosophers gathered to read

Jewish texts with scholars of Talmud and Jewish mysticism. The movement was enlarged and broadened when Christians joined us some ten years ago and we then read from the Torah and the New Testament. This was fairly natural for Christians, because the Torah is part of the Christian Bible and despite the long history of Jewish and Christian animosities, there has been, for over a century, a sense that it was the combination of Judaism and Christianity together with Greek culture that produced what is sometimes called Western culture or as we like to say in America, the Judeo-Christian tradition. Following the holocaust and with recent Christian scholarship of the historical Jesus and the Jewish character of the early Church, Christian scholars have sought to bring Christianity closer to Judaism. But this has been met by an increasing Jewish and Christian antipathy toward Islam.

Scriptural Reasoning was relatively tame and acceptable when its practitioners read and interpreted the Torah and New Testament, but the movement really became bold and internationally significant when, about seven years ago it started to included the study of Islamic texts. One can imagine the exciting possibilities for discourse and discovery if you merely consider the math. When you move from two partners to three, from a dyad to a triad, the possibilities multiply. Two represents a lovely couple capable of romance but three represents a family, the challenge to bring romance into reality. Emmanuel Levinas has said that the relation of the one to another can easily remain a private matter, but when you add a third, you enter the public domain, things get far more complex and you must consider issues of justice. We have already discussed the problem of binaries which tend toward polarities and oppositions. When a third is added complexity multiplies but so too do terms of relation and mediation. I have already mentioned my sense that the three scriptures are each, in their own way, a combination ethnocentrism and theocentrism. Ochs likes to say that the enlightenment sought a solution to what it saw as excessive ethnocentrism in the

Bible by substituting abstract universals for God. My sense is that the addition of Islamic texts to scriptural reasoning supplies us with yet another avenue to approach the problem of the new modern form of ethnocentrism. This is an ethnocentrism which pits the Judeo-Christian Tradition and its modern reincarnation in a post-capitalist global culture against the rest of the world. In the face of this new ethnocentrism, Islam, as both "Western and Eastern" both Us and Them, Same and Different, can be the crucial mediating element between the West and the world. In addition, Islam offers the world the possibility of another chance, another model, for dealing with the conflict between tradition and modernity, between religion and the secular. Judaism followed Christianity in allowing its religious texts, rituals, symbols and liturgies to be disembowelled and made over into the terms of the enlightenment. In this process, Christianity and Judaism became "modern liberal religions" that were transformed into mere handmaidens of modernity. They became shallow reflections of enlightenment ideals and supplied superficial prooftexts to legitimize and not challenge the new modern economic, political, social, and cultural order.

Islam has, by and large, resisted the modern West and now wages a somewhat desperate battle to preserve its traditional beliefs and practices in the face of modernity. Islamic leaders are certainly aware of the avenues carved out by modern Jews and Christians and some are calling for Muslims to follow parallel paths. Yet others are trying to blaze a new way that will steer between the paths of modern liberal religion on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other. Some Muslims, whose representatives are in this room, are trying to do again the mix of tradition and modernity, Islam and secularism, in new ways that will be a true mediation between the two poles of fundamentalism and secularism and a source of healing and truth that contemporary Jews and Christians will want to follow.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Martin Buber, *On the Bible,* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p.24.

[2] *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2001), p.85.

[3] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Sarah and Hagar," *Talking About Genesis: A Resource Guide* (NY: Doubleday, 1996), p.97.

[4] *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, Sarna, p.88.

[5] There is very strong scholarly tradition of Qur'an commentary in Islam, going back to the earliest times, which, in order of preference, gives a very special place to the Old and New Testaments as the exegetical tools to understand the Qur'anic narrative. According to their hierarchical arrangement, these scriptures are the next to the Qur'an itself. Hamid al-Din Farahi and Amin Ahsan Islahi are the two great representatives of this line of commentators in modern times. Steven Kepnes' treatment of the figures of Ishmael and Hagar resonates very strongly with some of the best commentaries on the Qur'an on the issue of Ishmael and Hagar. At this point in his paper he says, "It is noteworthy that the recent Jewish Publication Society version of the last part of verse "*al penai kol echav ishkan*" translates it not as "he shall live at odds with" but, "He shall dwell alongside all his kinsmen."

It is almost exactly the same what Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhi, the greatest of contemporary Qur'an commentators, has written in his *Tadabbur i Qur'an*, (Meditating on the Qur'an) the best of commentaries on the Qur'an to be written in the 20th century. It is very interesting to look at the way Muslim and Jewish scholars approach and reason with their respective Scriptures as well as the Scripture of the Other. What is more amazing is that Islahi has used, obviously quite independently and remaining within the tradition of Qur'an commentary, the same proof texts from Exodus and Genesis that Steve does with a slightly different treatment. This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the subject so I translate a few paragraphs from his *Tadabbur i Qur'an*

(Faran Foundation, Lahore, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 327-329) to give an idea to the readers.

> It was necessary for the sacrifices that these should be offered to the Lord in the *ma'bad* (place of worship) and ...the Holy of the Holy was prescribed to face the South. Similarly the greatest annual sacrifice was also made facing the South. This is a significant point which is usually not taken into consideration whereas it is an established fact that the Tent of worship of the Jews always faced North from the beginning. (See Exodus 27: 9)..."and the table was set out side the curtain in the northern corner of the tent of gathering and on it the bread was placed before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses, and the lamp was also placed in the tent of gathering on the southern side." (Exodus 40: 21-24) In our view the rationale of all these directions is that who ever enters the presence of he Lord would face South i.e. towards Mecca and the Abrahamic tabernacle..... This is further corroborated by the fact that God had made this tabernacle the place towards the children of Abraham faced (*qiblah*). Abraham made his descendents settle in the North and East of Arabia and made the dwelling place of Ishmael their *qiblah*. Torah says that Ishmael settled facing his brothers. Genesis 25: 18 says "*....He dwelt facing all his kinsmen*" and Genesis 16:12 says "*He shall be a free man like a wild ass, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live facing all his kin.*" There can be no other correct explanation of "*he shall live facing all his kin*" as all the descendents of Abraham settled in the North and East of Arabia except Ishmael and who could *"live facing all his kin*" only if his dwelling happened to be in the direction to which they all faced. (Note that Islahi translates these verses from the Hebrew Bible differently, without knowing the recent Jewish Publication Society version mentioned above, without the tenor of the earlier translation which read, "*He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.*) **M. S. Umar, Editor.**

[6] Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. S. Kaplan. (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1995), p. 121.

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[7] *Ibid.*, p.146.

[8] It seems that there is a rough parallel in the Torah's notion of the Ger to the notion of the Dimi in Muslim societies. The Dimi is granted respect and certain protections; but the position of the Dimi, like that of the Ger, is not ultimately equal to the members of the host societies. I will shortly discuss the modern way of dealing with the relation of host societies to others who do not share the dominate religio-cultural identity. The modern way is to move to a universal homogenized culture which dissolves all cultural differences between peoples and assures them all the same minimal human rights. Although this strategy has obvious advantages, it also has the disadvantage of depriving people of life giving religio-cultural systems. Scriptural Reasoning attempts to forge a third way between the solution of bestowing minority status, as in the Ger or Dimi, and washing out all cultural difference in a universal global culture, and abstract declaration of human rights. That third way may begin from the notions of the Ger and Dimi but need to move well-beyond them to recognition of equal status for those who are different before God.

IBN ʿARABĪ /IQBAL
ON
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

A Myth of Origins

Ibn al-ʿArabī
William C. Chittick

Ibn al-ʿArabī was thoroughly versed in the dry ratiocination of the contemporary doctors of theology, but he avoided their methodological approach. He was more likely to rely on images, symbols, analogies, and allegories derived primarily from "openings" and "tastings" and deeply rooted in the Qurʾān and the sayings of Muhammad. He constantly returns to one basic theme: All things are intimately interrelated through their common roots in the Divine Reality. The universe in its indefinite multiplicity is nothing but the outward manifestation of God's names, which are the faces that God turns toward creation. The revealed names provide keys that unlock the door to the invisible world. Everywhere we look we see the properties and traces of the names within the created things.

Unique among creatures, human beings display the properties of every name of God, because they alone were created in God's form and given dominion over all creatures, each of which manifests only some of God's names. But people cannot actualize the divine names unless they follow the guidance revealed through the prophets. Reason, even in the

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best of circumstances, provides insufficient knowledge of God. It allows people to understand that God is incomparable and forever unknowable, but it can never tell them anything about His similarity and self-disclosure in the macrocosm and microcosm. In contrast, revelation provides a balanced knowledge of God, for it combines the declaration of incomparability that is grasped by reason with the similarity that answers to imagination. Only when reason works harmoniously with imagination on the basis of the prophetic message can people reach perfection. Those who are able to combine reason and imagination in themselves and God– the People of Unveiling. "The common people stand in the station of declaring similarity proper balance are those who have truly witnessed the lifting of the veils between, the People of Unveiling declare both similarity and incomparability, and the rational thinkers declare incomparability alone. Hence, God combined the two sides in His elect" (II 116.7).

The Qur'ānic View of Revelation

The Qur'ān pictures revelation as a message sent by God to human beings by means of a "prophet" *(nabī)* or "messenger" *(rasūl).* Revelation is a universal phenomenon, since *Every nation has its messenger* (10:47). It has two complementary dimensions that correspond to the two Shahādahs, the Islamic testimonies of faith: "There is no god but God" and "Muhammad is the messenger of God."

All prophets are given a message of *tawḥīd,* which declares that experienced reality comes from the One and returns to the One: *And We never sent a messenger before thee save that We revealed to him, saying, "There is no god but I, so serve Me"* (21:25). Muslims must have faith in every messenger of God, because each confirms the truth *(taṣdīq)* of the messages that went before. *And when Jesus son of Mary said, "Children of Israel, I am indeed God's messenger to you, confirming the Torah that has gone before me"* (61:6).

Although the basic message of all the messengers is the same, each messenger also brings unique teachings that define the particularities of his message. Thus, if "Muhammad is the messenger of God," Jesus, for his part, is *the messenger of God and His word that He committed to Mary, and a spirit from Him* (4:171). Other divine messengers also have specific functions and teachings. *We have sent no messenger save with the tongue of his people* (14:4).

The general function of the prophets is to guide people to felicity. God sent them to remind people that they were created to be His servants and vicegerents and to warn them of the consequences of shirking their responsibilities. The Qurʾān makes clear that ignoring guidance will lead to wretchedness and prevent felicity. Quoting as it were from the primordial revelation given to human beings, the Qurʾān says that when God sent Adam down from paradise, He said to him, *When there comes to you from Me guidance, then whosoever follows My guidance shall not go astray, neither shall he be wretched; but whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his life shall be a life of narrowness, and on the day of resurrection, We shall raise him blind* (20:123-24).

In short, the Qurʾān declares that the essential message of every prophet is the same, while the details of each message are unique. Hence the universality of religious truth is an article of Islamic faith. It is true that many Muslims believe that the universality of guidance pertains only to pre-Qurʾānic times, but others disagree; there is no "orthodox" interpretation *here* that Muslims must accept.

One would expect to find among Sufis a clear exposition of the universality of revealed truth without the reservations expressed by most other Muslims. But the Sufis had to take into account the beliefs of their contemporaries. Even Ibn al-ʿArabī, who was not afraid to attack the limitations of the juridical and theological mentalities, often defends a literal reading of the Qurʾānic criticisms of the People of the Book, without suggesting that by "Christians" or "Jews" the Qur'ān means anyone other than the contemporary practitioners of those religions.

The Qur'ān never criticizes the prophetic messages as such, but it often condemns misunderstandings or distortions by those who follow the prophets. The Shaykh sometimes criticizes specific distortions or misunderstandings in the Qur'ānic vein, but he does not draw the conclusion that many Muslims have drawn—that the coming of Islam abrogated *(naskh)* previous revealed religions. Rather, he says, Islam is like the sun and other religions like the stars. Just as the stars remain when the sun rises, so also the other religions remain valid when Islam appears. One can add a point that perhaps Ibn al-'Arabi would also accept: What appears as a sun from one point of view may be seen as a star from another point of view. Concerning abrogation, the Shaykh writes,

> All the revealed religions *[sharā'i']* are lights. Among these religions, the revealed religion of Muhammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun. Their being hidden is like the abrogation of the other revealed religions that takes place through Muhammad's revealed religion. Nevertheless, they do in fact exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized. This explains why we have been required in our all-inclusive religion to have faith in the truth of all the messengers and all the revealed religions. They are not rendered null *[bāṭil]* by abrogation—that is the opinion of the ignorant. (III 153.12)

If the Shaykh's pronouncements on other religions sometimes fail to recognize their validity in his own time, one reason may be that, like most other Muslims living in the western Islamic lands, he had little real contact with the Christians or Jews in his environment, not to speak of followers of religions farther afield. He had probably never met a saintly representative of either of these traditions, and he almost certainly had never read anything about these two religions except what was written in Islamic sources. Hence there is no reason that he should have accepted the validity of these religions except *in principle.* But this is an important qualification. To maintain the particular excellence of the Qur'ān and the superiority of Muhammad over all other prophets is not to deny the universal validity of revelation nor the necessity of revelation's appearing in particularized expressions. Since all revealed religions are true in principle, the particular circumstances that lead one to suspect that they have been corrupted may change. This is what happened when Sufis like Dārā Shikūh in India met Hindu saints.'

The Divine Names and the Origins of Religion

In Chapter 66 of the *Futūḥāt,* the Shaykh provides a highly original account of God's creating the universe and sending the prophets. He focuses on the divine roots of revelation, which is to say that he sets out to explain what it is in *wujūd* that results in the appearance of prophets in the cosmos. Instead of answering in the usual fashion that prophecy is rooted in mercy and guidance, he looks deeper into the Divine Reality. In the process he shows that man-made law—and here he uses the Arabic word *nāmūs,* which is derived from Greek nomos—manifests the same divine motivations that establish revealed religions.

Ibn al-'Arabī frequently discusses divine roots by explaining the implications of the divine names in the rational mode of the theologians. But in Chapter 66, he provides an imaginal, even mythic, account of how the divine names exercise their effects in the world. In the process, he personifies the names in a manner that is probably unprecedented in Islamic sources, not least because, if the names of the names were changed, we would have a polytheistic myth. He is completely aware of what he is doing, of course, and he warns the reader at the beginning not to imagine "manyness or an ontological gathering." He gives the narrative an imaginal slant so that people will be able to grasp in concrete terms the principles that function within the divine things *(ilāhiyyāt).* Otherwise, they would be forced to fall back on the abstract theorizing of the theologians.

What the Shaykh explains in his account should by now be more or less familiar. He states, in brief, that the immutable entities are known by God, but in order to become existent entities, they need both God's desire to give them existence and His power to do so. Thus he is explaining in mythic fashion the hierarchy of attributes that are found in *wujūd.* Creation of the universe depends upon God's power; His power comes into play on the basis of His desire; His desire depends upon His knowledge of the possible things; and His knowledge depends upon His *wujūd,* which the Shaykh sometimes identifies with the divine life. Thus we have the four basic names that are embraced by the name God: Living, Knowing, Desiring, and Powerful. Their order is not haphazard, but depends upon the intrinsic characteristics of *wujūd.*

The mythic form of the Shaykh's account suggests one of several resources that Muslims have for bridging the gaps between Semitic monotheism and various forms of polytheism. Are the gods properly to be understood as independent beings, or as personifications of what Muslims know as "divine names"? Certainly Ibn al-'Arabī would choose the latter alternative– there can be no "ontological gathering." He would maintain that any attempt to consider the gods as independent entities represents a human opinion or a distortion of an original prophetic message.

After explaining how the divine names meet together and decide among themselves to bring the cosmos into existence, the Shaykh imagines that God gives them free rein to exercise their effects. The result verges on chaos, for the entities that manifest the effects of the Exalter disagree with those who manifest the Abaser, those who display the Forgiver argue with those who reflect the Avenger, and those who represent the Withholder dispute with those who act on behalf of the Bestower. Hence the creatures have recourse to the names, asking them to establish norms of order. The names in turn refer back to the divine Essence, who appoints the name Lord (*rabb*) to give order to their conflicting properties.

Elsewhere Ibn al-'Arabī explains that the primary divine attribute designated by the name Lord is *iṣlāḥ,* which means to make whole, wholesome, and sound; to put in order; to ameliorate; to remedy; to conciliate and to establish peace. Hence the cosmos has need of the Lord so that it may reach its *maṣlaḥa* (a word from the same root), which can be translated as "(means to) wholesomeness." "The cosmos needs the Lord more than any other name, because it is a name for every means to wholesomeness" (II 442.20). The opposite of *iṣlāḥ* is *ifsād,* to corrupt. The fact that the basic attribute designated by Lord is "making wholesome" explains why the angels objected to God's plan to create Adam as vicegerent in the earth and why they said to Him, *What, wilt Thou place therein one who will work* corruption *and shed blood?* (2:30).

> The angels glorify only the praise of their Lord. The Lord is He who makes wholesome. Making wholesome applies only to corruption. God never mentioned that the angels glorify any name other than Lord.... Hence the angels knew that it was the name Lord that turned its attentiveness toward the cosmos, because that which dominates over the earth is the authority of caprice, and it is caprice that gives rise to the corruption of which the angels... spoke.' The angels knew what would happen because of their knowledge of the realities. And it did indeed happen as they had said. Their mistake was only that they hurried to pronounce these words without knowing God's wisdom in His act. (II 251.24)

In the chapter of the *Futūḥāt* devoted to the name Lord, the Shaykh explains in more detail how God in respect of being the Lord undertakes to establish the wholesomeness and best interest of the things in the cosmos. He looks at the fundamental purpose of each thing's existence, and He gives it the exact situation appropriate for its own nature in order to assure its own specific felicity. In each case, the thing exists for the purpose of praising and glorifying God, or to make manifest the divine names and attributes in the most fitting and appropriate way.

> If you look at the possible things in respect of their own essences, there is nothing that would determine the preferability of one of the two sides [that is, existence or nonexistence] over the other. The Lord looks upon the preferability of their existence and nonexistence, their coming into existence at an earlier time or a later time, their place and position, and then He establishes relationships between them and their times, their places, and their situations. He undertakes what is most wholesome for each possible thing and makes it appear within that. For He only makes it appear in order to glorify Him and to know Him with the knowledge that is appropriate for it in keeping with what its capacity can accept. There is nothing more.' This is why you will see some possible things coming at an earlier time than other possible things and some coming later, some being high and some being low. They undergo variations in diverse states and levels, such as rulership and dismissal, craftsmanship and trade, movement and rest, joining and separation, and other such things. Thus the possible things undergo change and fluctuation in the midst of other possible things, not in anything else. (IV 199.15)

Having discussed in his myth of origins how God chose the name Lord to put the cosmos in order, the Shaykh turns to the human situation in order to explain the ontological necessity of revelation, which brings about the wholesomeness of human beings and allows them to choose their own best interest. The idea of establishing wholesomeness keeps on recurring throughout the passage, reminding us that the basic point of the narrative is to illustrate how God keeps balance in creation in function of the name Lord, whether this takes place on the level of creation as a whole or on the level of the human situation within the cosmos. The Shaykh points out that wise thinkers, left to their own devices, are able to grasp the divine origin of the cosmos. Here his narrative is slightly reminiscent of

Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān, the famous philosophical tale written by his contemporary Andalusian Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185).[4] In the manner of many Muslim philosophers, Ibn Ṭufayl thought that the rational perception of philosophers could achieve the same level of knowledge as the revelation given to the prophets. Ibn al-ʿArabī disagrees vehemently, as he makes clear throughout his works. In this particular passage, he says that true philosophers will acknowledge the superiority of the prophets and follow them, for they will recognize that the rational knowledge achieved by philosophy pertains only to God's incomparability. Knowledge of His similarity and of how this functions to bring about salvation and nearness to God is inaccessible to the unaided human reason. However, a sound rational faculty will recognize the truth of the prophetic message and accept it. Toward the end of the passage, Ibn al-ʿArabī turns to criticizing the philosophers and theologians of his own time.

Interestingly, at the very end of the chapter, the Shaykh excludes from criticism the great philosopher Averroes (d. 1198). As mentioned in the introduction, Ibn al-'Arabi had met Averroes when he was perhaps fifteen, at which time Averroes would have been fifty-five; the present passage makes clear that Ibn al-ʿArabī had a good opinion of him. In the West, Averroes was more influential than any other Muslim thinker except perhaps Avicenna. But the Shaykh portrays Averroes not as a skeptic who questioned the validity of revealed religion– as he has sometimes been described in Western sources–but rather as a great master of rational discourse who defended revelation. Already in the Shaykh's time Averroes was remembered more as a doctor of the Sharīʿah than as a philosopher. In any case his philosophical works remained largely unstudied in the civilization that nurtured him, while Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings spread to every corner of the Islamic world.

In what follows, I translate Sharīʿah as "revealed religion." This term has long since entered the English language to mean the revealed law of Islam, or the individual, social, and ritual regulations of the religion. In this sense, the term is often contrasted with *Ṭarīqah,* or the spiritual path, the body of teachings that is concerned with transformation of the soul and is codified in many forms of Sufism. Literally, the word *Sharīʿah* means "road (leading to water)," and Ibn al-ʾArabi frequently employs it in a broad sense to refer to all the teachings brought by a divine messenger, not simply the social and ritual regulations. He also employs it in the plural to refer to the religions brought by the prophets, or the divinely instituted paths for reaching the water of life. This then is the chapter:

Chapter 66

On the True Knowledge of the Mystery of Revealed Religion, Outwardly and Inwardly, and On the Divine Name That Brought It into Existence

God says, *Had there been in the earth angels walking at peace, We would have sent down upon them out of heaven an angel as messenger* [17:95]. He also says, *We never chastise, until We send forth a messenger* [17:15].

Know that *divine names* is an expression of a state given by the realities. So pay attention to what you will hear, and do not imagine manyness or an ontological gathering! What we will discuss in this chapter is only a hierarchy of intelligible realities that are many in respect of relationships, but not in respect of entified *wujūd,* for the Essence of the Real is one in respect of being the Essence.

We know in respect of our *wujūd,* our poverty, and our possibility, that there must be a Preponderator by whom we are supported. We also know that our *wujūd* must demand from that Support diverse relationships. The Lawgiver alludes to these relationships as the "most beautiful names." In respect of being the Speaker He named Himself by them at the level of the necessity of His divine *wujūd,* which cannot be shared by anyone, for He is One God, and there is no other God.

After this introduction concerning the origin of this matter and the production of effects and the giving of preponderance within the possible cosmos, I say:

The names gathered together in the presence of the Named. They gazed upon their own realities and meanings and sought the manifestation of their own properties in order that their entities might become distinct through their effects. For Creator— who is Ordainer— Knower, Governor, Differentiator, Originator, Form-giver, Provider, Life-giver, Slayer, Inheritor, Grateful, and all the rest of the divine names gazed upon their own essences. But they found nothing created, governed, differentiated, or nourished. They said, "What can be done so that the entities within which our own properties become manifest may become manifest that thereby our authority may become manifest?"

Hence the divine names— which are demanded by some of the realities of the cosmos after the manifestation of the entity of the cosmos— had recourse to the name Originator. They said to him, "Perhaps you can give existence to these entities so that our properties may become manifest and our authority established, for the presence within which we now dwell does not receive our effects."

Originator said, "That goes back to the name Powerful, for I am under his scope."

The root of this is as follows: In their state of nonexistence the possible things asked the divine names— an asking through their state of abasement and poverty— as follows: "Nonexistence has blinded us, so we are not able to perceive one another or to know what the Real requires you to do with us. If you were to make manifest our entities and clothe them in the robe of *wujūd,* you would be giving us blessings and we would undertake the appropriate veneration and reverence. Moreover, your ruling authority becomes genuine through our becoming manifest in actuality. Today you possess ruling authority over us only potentially and virtually. What we seek from you is what you should be seeking to an even greater degree from us."

The names replied, "What the possible things have said is true!" So they fell to seeking the same thing.

When the names had recourse to the name Powerful, he said, "I am under the scope of the name Desiring, so I cannot bring a single one of your entities into existence without his specification. The possible thing itself does not give me the ability to do that. First the command of Commander must come from his Lord. When he commands the thing to enter into engendered existence, saying to it 'Be!' then he gives me the ability from himself, and I undertake to bring it into existence and immediately give it engendered existence. So have recourse to the name Desiring. Perhaps he will give preponderance to and specify the side of *wujūd* over the side of nonexistence. Then I, Commander, and Speaker will join together and give you existence."

So the names had recourse to the name Desiring. They said to him, "We asked the name Powerful to bring our entities into existence, but he deferred the command to you. What do you decree?" Desiring said, "Powerful spoke the truth! But I have no news about the property of the name Knowing in respect to you. Does he or does he not have precedent knowledge that you will be given existence, so that we can specify it for you? I am under the scope of the name Knowing. Go to him and mention your situation to him."

So they went to the name Knowing and mentioned what the name Desiring had said. Knowing said, "Desiring spoke the truth! And I have precedent knowledge that you will be given existence. But courtesy must be observed. For we have a presence that watches over us, and that is the name God. So we must make ourselves present before Him, for he is the Presence of All-comprehensiveness."

All the names gathered together in the presence of God. He said, "What is on your mind?" They told him the story. He said, "I am the name that comprehends your realities and I denote the Named, who is an All-holy Essence described by perfection and incomparability. Stay here while I enter in upon the Object of my denotation." So he entered in upon the Object of his denotation and told It what the possible things had said and what the names were discussing. The Essence said, "Go out, and tell each one of the names to become connected to what its reality requires among the possible things...."

So the name God went out, next to him the name Speaker, acting as his spokesman to the possible things and to the names. He mentioned to them what the Named had said. Knowing, Desiring, Speaking, and Powerful established their connections, and the first possible thing became outwardly manifest through the specification of Desiring and the property of Knowing.

Once the entities and the effects had become manifest in the engendered universe, some of them exercised authority and dominated over others in keeping with the names by which they were supported. This led to quarrel and dispute. Then the possible things said, "We fear lest our order be corrupted and we return to the nonexistence where we used to dwell." So they called upon the names through that which was cast to them by the names Knowing and Governing. They said, "O names! If your properties were to follow a known scale, a designated boundary, and a leader to which you all go back, that would preserve our *wujūd* for us as well as your effectivity within us for you. That would be more wholesome for both us and you. So have recourse to God! Perhaps He will present to you someone who will set a boundary at which you can stop. If not, we will be destroyed, and you will no longer have any effects!"

The names replied, "This is the right means of wholesomeness and the best opinion!" Hence they did what they were asked. They said, "The name Governor will communicate your situation." They informed Governor, and he said, "I will do so."

The name Governor entered, and then he emerged with the

Real's command to the name "Lord." He said to him, "Do what wholesomeness demands so that the entities of the possible things may subsist." The name Lord took two viziers to help him in what he was commanded to do. One vizier was the name Governor, and the other was the name Differentiator. God says, *He* governs *the affair, He differentiates the signs; haply you will have certitude concerning the encounter with your* Lord [13:2], who is the "leader." So consider how exact is the Word of God, since it employs expressions that fit the state that is demanded by the actual situation!

The name Lord set down for them limits and established for them customs by which the wholesomeness of the kingdom might be established, and *to test them, which one of them is more beautiful in works* [11:7]. God made these limits and customs of two kinds: One kind is called "wise regulation." He cast it into the original dispositions of the souls of the great human beings. Hence they set down limits and established laws through a power that they found in their own souls. They did so in every city, place, and clime, in accordance with what was demanded by the constitution and nature of those areas, since they knew what wisdom demanded. Through that they preserved the possessions, lives, families, relatives, and kinship relationships of the people. They named it the "laws," a word that means "cause of good," since *nāmūs* in technical usage is the one through whom good comes, while *jāsūs is* employed for evil.

So these were the wise laws established by the rational thinkers as the result of an inspiration from God of which they were unaware for the sake of the wholesomeness, order, and arrangement of everyone in the world where there was no divinely revealed religion. The founders of these laws did not know that these affairs would bring about nearness to God, nor that they would yield a Garden or a Fire, nor [did they know] anything connected with the next world. They did not know that there is a next world and a sensory resurrection within natural bodies after death, or an abode within which there is food, drink, clothing, marriage, and joy, and another abode within which there is chastisement and pain. For the existence of all this is possible, its nonexistence is possible, and they had no proof of the preponderance of one of the possibilities over the other.

And monasticism they invented [57:27]. *So* their laws and their means to wholesomeness were built upon bringing about the subsistence of wholesomeness in this abode. Then individually, in their own souls, they came to know the divine sciences, such as *tawḥīd,* the glorification and veneration worthy of God's majesty, the attributes of incomparability, the lack of any likeness or similarity. Those who knew and understood this called it to the attention of those who did not. They urged people to accept the correct view. At the same time they let the people know that rational faculties are limited in respect of their reflective powers and cannot pass beyond certain bounds; that God effuses His knowledge into the hearts of certain of His servants, thereby teaching them *a knowledge from Him* [18:65], and that this did not seem unlikely in their eyes; and that God has deposited within the celestial world certain commands concerning which some knowledge can be gained by drawing conclusions from the existence of their effects in this elemental world. This is indicated by God's words, *He revealed to each heaven its command* [41:12].

They investigated the realities of their own souls. They saw that when the bodily form dies, nothing is lacking from any of its members. Hence they came to know that the body perceives and moves by means of something added to it. They investigated this added thing and they recognized their own souls. Then they saw that the soul gains knowledge after having been ignorant, so they understood that even though the soul is nobler than the body, it is accompanied by poverty and need. They ascended through rational consideration from one thing to another. Each time they reached something, they saw that it was in need of something else. Finally rational consideration took them to something that was in need of nothing, which had no likeness, which was similar to nothing, and to which nothing was similar. They stopped there and said: This is the First. It must be One in itself in respect of itself, and its Firstness and Unity must not accept a second, since there is nothing like it and nothing comparable to it. So they declared the unity of its *wujūd.* When they saw that the possible things in themselves had no reason to come into existence, they knew that this One had given them *wujūd.* Hence the possible things have need of the One and venerate it by negating from it everything by which their own essences are described. This is the furthest limit of the rational faculty.

While these rational thinkers were busy with their own affairs, there arose among them a person of their own kind whom they looked upon as having no position in knowledge. They did not believe that he was the possessor of sound reflection or correct rational consideration. He said to them, "I am God's messenger to you."

They said, "Let us be fair. Look at his claim itself. Does he claim what is possible, or what is impossible? Logical proofs have established for us that God possesses a divine effusion that He may give to whomsoever He wills, just as He has effused it upon the spirits of these celestial spheres and the intellects. All things share in possibility, so no possible thing is more worthy than others in respect of possibility. Hence we must consider the truthfulness or falsity of this claimant. We should not proceed to make either of these judgments without a proof, for that would be discourtesy, given our knowledge."

They said, "Do you have a proof for the truthfulness of what you claim?" So he brought them proofs and they considered his manner of proving and his proofs. They considered that this person had no reports that reflective thoughts could have reached by drawing conclusions, nor was any such thing known from him. So they came to know that He who *revealed to each heaven its command* [41:12] had revealed to each heaven the existence of this person and of what he brought. Hence they hurried to declare their faith in him and acknowledge his truthfulness. They came to know that God had given him knowledge of the sciences which He had deposited in the celestial world and which could not be reached by their reflective powers, and that He had given him a knowledge of Himself which they did not have.

They saw that this person descended in his knowledge of God to the level of the weak-minded common people, bestowing upon them what would make their rational faculties wholesome; and also to people of great rational faculty and sound consideration, giving them also that which would make their rational faculties wholesome. Hence they knew that this man possessed, through the divine effusion, something from beyond the stage of reason and that God had given him a knowledge of that effusion and a power over it that He had not given to them. They acknowledged his superiority over themselves, had faith in him, declared his truthfulness, and followed him. So he designated for them the acts that bring about nearness to God. He taught them about possible things created by God and hidden from them and about what would come to be among them from Him in the future. He told them about the resurrection, the gathering, the mustering, the Garden, and the Fire.

In this way messengers were sent according to the diversity of the times and the variety of the situations. Each of them confirmed the truth of the others. None of them differed whatsoever in the roots by which they were supported and of which they spoke, even if rulings differed. Revealed religions were sent down, and rulings came. The governing property belonged to the time and the situation, just as God has declared: *To every one of you We have appointed a right way and a revealed law* [5:48]. So the roots coincided, without disagreeing on anything.

The people distinguished between the prophetic regulations promulgated by God as revealed religion and the wise regulations established by the sages in accordance with their rational consideration. They understood that the [prophetic] command was more complete and that it came from God, without doubt. They accepted what they were told about the

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unseen things and had faith in the messengers. None of them resisted except him who did not counsel his own soul concerning his knowledge, but followed his caprice and sought leadership over his fellows. He was ignorant of his own soul and its measure and he was ignorant of his Lord.

Hence the root and the cause of the establishment of revealed religions in the cosmos was the search for the wholesomeness of the cosmos and for the knowledge of God of which reason is ignorant, because it does not receive it through its own reflection. In other words, reason cannot discover this knowledge independently in respect of its own consideration. Hence the revealed books came down with this knowledge, and the tongues of the messengers and prophets spoke about it. Then the rational thinkers came to know that there were certain things concerning the knowledge of God in which they were deficient and which the messengers completed for them.

I do not mean by "rational thinkers" those who nowadays speak about philosophy. I mean only those who followed the path of the prophets. In other words, they busied themselves with their own souls and with ascetic discipline, inner struggle, retreats, and preparing themselves for that which enters in upon the heart from the celestial world when the heart is purified, that which has been revealed to the high heavens. These are the ones I mean by "rational thinkers." As for those who busy themselves with chatter, talk *[kalām],* and debate, employing their reflective powers to analyze the component words that have issued from the first philosophers while remaining oblivious of the affair undertaken by those great men, the likes of these– who are among us today– have no worth in the eyes of any person of intelligence.' For they mock at religion, show contempt for God's servants, and have reverence only for those among themselves who stand in the same place. Their hearts have been overcome by love for this world and the search for position and leadership. So God has abased them, just as they have abased knowledge. He has scorned them and derided them, letting them have recourse to the doors of the ignorant–the kings and the rulers. So the kings and the rulers abase them.

The words of people like this are of no account. God has *sealed their hearts* [2:7] and *made them deaf and blinded their eyes* [47:23], despite the fact that among themselves they claim extravagantly to be the best of the world's inhabitants. Even the jurist– he who gives legal pronouncements in God's religion– is better than they in every respect, in spite of the paucity of his abstinence. After all, people who have faith, even though they acquire it only through following the authority of others, are better than those who consider themselves "rational thinkers." God forbid that any intelligent person have the attributes of such as these!

We have met few people who are true rational thinkers. These are they who have the greatest knowledge of God's messengers. They are among those who follow most carefully the examples [*sunan*] of the Messenger and are most concerned with preserving his examples. They know the veneration demanded by God's majesty, and they are aware of the knowledge of Himself that God singles out for His servants– the prophets and the friends of God who follow them– in respect of a special divine effusion. This effusion is outside the ordinary learning that is acquired through study and effort and cannot be reached by reason in respect of its own reflective power.

I have listened to the words of one of the great ones among them [i.e., Averroes]. He had seen the knowledge that God had opened up to me without rational consideration or reading, but through a retreat in which I had been alone with God, even though I had not been seeking. He said, "Praise belongs to God, that I should have lived in a time in which I saw *one whom God has given mercy from* Him, *and has taught him knowledge proceeding from* Him [18:65]." *God singles out for his mercy whom He will, and God is of bounty abounding* [2:105]. (I *322-25)*

IS RELIGION POSSIBLE?[1]

Muhammad Iqbal

Broadly speaking religious life may be divided into three periods. These may be described as the periods of 'Faith', 'Thought', and 'Discovery.' In the first period religious life appears as a form of discipline which the individual or a whole people must accept as an unconditional command without any rational understanding of the ultimate meaning and purpose of that command. This attitude may be of great consequence in the social and political history of a people, but is not of much consequence in so far as the individual's inner growth and expansion are concerned. Perfect submission to discipline is followed by a rational understanding of the discipline and the ultimate source of its authority. In this period religious life seeks its foundation in a kind of metaphysics– a logically consistent view of the world with God as a part of that view. In the third period metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the Ultimate Reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness. As in the words of a Muslim Sufi– 'no understanding of the

Holy Book is possible until it is actually revealed to the believer just as it was revealed to the Prophet.'[2] It is, then, in the sense of this last phase in the development of religious life that I use the word religion in the question that I now propose to raise. Religion in this sense is known by the unfortunate name of Mysticism, which is supposed to be a life-denying, fact-avoiding attitude of mind directly opposed to the radically empirical outlook of our times. Yet higher religion, which is only a search for a larger life, is essentially experience and recognized the necessity of experience as its foundation long before science learnt to do so. It is a genuine effort to clarify human consciousness, and is, as such, as critical of its level of experience as Naturalism is of its own level.

As we all know, it was Kant who first raised the question: 'Is metaphysics possible?'[3] He answered this question in the negative; and his argument applies with equal force to the realities in which religion is especially interested. The manifold of sense, according to him, must fulfil certain formal conditions in order to constitute knowledge. The thing-in-itself is only a limiting idea. Its function is merely regulative. If there is some actuality corresponding to the idea, it falls outside the boundaries of experience, and consequently its existence cannot be rationally demonstrated. This verdict of Kant cannot be easily accepted. It may fairly be argued that in view of the more recent developments of science, such as the nature of matter as 'bottled-up light waves', the idea of the universe as an act of thought, finiteness of space and time and Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy[4] in Nature, the case for a system of rational theology is not so bad as Kant was led to think. But for our present purposes it is unnecessary to consider this point in detail. As to the thing-in-itself, which is inaccessible to pure reason because of its falling beyond the boundaries of experience, Kant's verdict can be accepted only if we start with the assumption that all experience other than the normal level of experience is impossible. The only question, therefore, is whether the normal level is the only level of knowledge-yielding experience. Kant's view of the thing-in-itself and the thing as it appears to us very much determined the character of his question regarding the possibility of metaphysics. But what if the position, as understood by him, is reversed? The great Muslim Sufi philosopher, Muḥyddīn Ibn al-ʿArabī of Spain, has made the acute observation that God is a percept; the world is a concept.[5] Another Muslim Sufi thinker and poet, ʿIrāqī, insists on the plurality of space-orders and time-orders and speaks of a Divine Time and a Divine Space.[6] It may be that what we call the external world is only an intellectual construction, and that there are other levels of human experience capable of being systematized by other orders of space and time– levels in which concept and analysis do not play the same role as they do in the case of our normal experience. It may, however, be said that the level of experience to which concepts are inapplicable cannot yield any knowledge of a universal character, for concepts alone are capable of being socialized. The standpoint of the man who relies on religious experience for capturing Reality must always remain individual and incommunicable. This objection has some force if it is meant to insinuate that the mystic is wholly ruled by his traditional ways, attitudes, and expectations. Conservatism is as bad in religion as in any other department of human activity. It destroys the ego's creative freedom and closes up the paths of fresh spiritual enterprise. This is the main reason why our medieval mystic techniques can no longer produce original discoveries of ancient Truth. The fact, however, that religious experience is incommunicable does not mean that the religious man's pursuit is futile. Indeed, the incommunicability of religious experience gives us a clue to the ultimate nature of the ego. In our daily social intercourse we live and move in seclusion, as it were. We do not care to reach the inmost individuality of men. We treat them as mere functions, and approach them from those aspects of their identity which are capable of conceptual treatment. The climax of religious life, however, is the discovery of the ego as an individual deeper than his conceptually describable habitual self-hood. It is in contact with the Most Real that the ego discovers its uniqueness, its metaphysical status, and the possibility of improvement in that status. Strictly speaking, the experience which leads to this discovery is not a conceptually manageable intellectual fact; it is a vital fact, an attitude consequent on an inner biological transformation which cannot be captured in the net of logical categories. It can embody itself only in a world-making or world-shaking act; and in this form alone the content of this timeless experience can diffuse itself in the time-movement, and make itself effectively visible to the eye of history. It seems that the method of dealing with Reality by means of concepts is not at all a serious way of dealing with it. Science does not care whether its electron is a real entity or not. It may be a mere symbol, a mere convention. Religion, which is essentially a mode of actual living, is the only serious way of handling Reality. As a form of higher experience it is corrective of our concepts of philosophical theology or at least makes us.

Suspicious of the purely rational process which forms these concepts. Science can afford to ignore metaphysics altogether, and may even believe it to be 'a justified form of poetry',[7] as Lange defined it, or 'a legitimate play of grown-ups', as Nietzsche described it. But the religious expert who seeks to discover his personal status in the constitution of things cannot, in view of the final aim of his struggle, be satisfied with what science may regard as a vital lie, a mere 'as-if'[8] to regulate thought and conduct. In so far as the ultimate nature of Reality is concerned, nothing is at stake in the venture of science; in the religious venture the whole career of the ego as an assimilative personal centre of life and experience is at stake. Conduct, which involves a decision of the ultimate fate of the agent cannot be based on illusions. A wrong concept misleads the understanding; a wrong deed degrades the whole man, and may eventually demolish the structure of the human ego. The mere concept affects life only partially; the deed is dynamically related to Reality and issues from a generally constant attitude of the whole man towards reality. No doubt the deed, i.e. the control of psychological and physiological processes with a view to tune up the ego for an immediate contact with the Ultimate Reality is, and cannot but be, individual in form and content; yet the deed, too, is liable to be socialized when others begin to live through it with a view to discover for themselves its effectiveness as a method of approaching the Real. The evidence of religious experts in all ages and countries is that there are potential types of consciousness lying close to our normal consciousness. If these types of consciousness open up possibilities of life-giving and knowledge-yielding experience, the question of the possibility of religion as a form of higher experience is a perfectly legitimate one and demands our serious attention.

But, apart from the legitimacy of the question, there are important reasons why it should be raised at the present moment of the history of modern culture. In the first place, the scientific interest of the question. It seems that every culture has a form of Naturalism peculiar to its own world-feeling; and it further appears that every form of Naturalism ends in some sort of Atomism. We have Indian Atomism, Greek Atomism, Muslim Atomism, and Modern Atomism.[9] Modern Atomism is, however, unique. Its amazing mathematics, which sees the universe as an elaborate differential equation; and its physics which, following its own methods, has been led to smash some of the old gods of its own temple, have already brought us to the point of asking the question whether the casualty-bound aspect of Nature is the whole truth about it? Is not the Ultimate Reality invading our consciousness from some other direction as well? Is the purely intellectual method of overcoming Nature the only method? 'We have acknowledged', says Professor Eddington, "that the entities of physics can from their very nature form only a partial aspect of the reality. How are we to deal with the other part? It cannot be said that other part concerns us less than the physical entities. Feelings purpose, values, make up our consciousness as much as sense-impressions. We follow up the sense-impressions and find that they lead into an external world discussed by science; we follow up the other elements of our being and find that they lead—not into a world of space and time, but surely somewhere."[10]

In the second place we have to look to the great practical importance of the question. The modern man with his philosophies of criticism and scientific specialism finds himself in a strange predicament. His Naturalism has given him an unprecedented control over the forces of Nature, but has robbed him of faith in his own future. It is strange how the same idea affects different cultures differently. The formulation of the theory of evolution in the world of Islam brought into being Rūmī's tremendous enthusiasm for the biological future of man. No cultured Muslim can read such passages as the following without a thrill of joy:

Low in the earth
I lived in realms of ore and stone;
And then I smiled in many-tinted flowers;
Then roving with the wild and wandering hours, O'er earth and air and ocean's zone,
In a new birth,
I dived and flew,
And crept and ran,
And all the secret of my essence drew
Within a form that brought them all to view— And lo, a Man!
And then my goal,
Beyond the clouds, beyond the sky,
In realms. where none may change or die
In angel form; and then away
Beyond the bounds of night and day,
And Life and Death, unseen or seen,
Where all that is hath ever been,
As One and Whole.

(Rūmī: Thādānī's Translation.)[11]

On the other hand, the formulation of the same view of evolution with far greater precision in Europe has led to the belief that 'there now appears to be no scientific basis for the idea that the present rich complexity of human endowment will ever be materially exceeded.' That is how the modern man's secret despair hides itself behind the screen of scientific terminology. Nietzsche, although he thought that the idea of evolution did not justify the belief that man was unsurpassable, cannot be regarded as an exception in this respect. His enthusiasm for the future of man ended in the doctrine of eternal recurrence– perhaps the most hopeless idea of immortality ever formed by man. This eternal repetition is not eternal 'becoming'; it is the same old idea of 'being' masquerading as 'becoming.'

Thus, wholly overshadowed by the results of his intellectual activity, the modern man has ceased to live soulfully, i.e. from within. In the domain of thought he is living in open conflict with himself; and in the domain of economic and political life he is living in open conflict with others. He finds himself unable to control his ruthless egoism and his infinite gold-hunger which is gradually killing all higher striving in him and bringing him nothing but life-weariness. Absorbed in the 'fact', that is to say, the optically present source of sensation, he is entirely cut off from the unplumbed depths of his own being. In the wake of his systematic materialism has at last come that paralysis of energy which Huxley apprehended and deplored. The condition of things in the East is no better. The technique of medieval mysticism by which religious life, in its higher manifestations, developed itself both in the East and in the West has now practically failed. And in the Muslim East it has, perhaps, done far greater havoc than anywhere else. Far from reintegrating the forces of the average man's inner life, and thus preparing him for participation in the march of history, it has taught him a false renunciation and made him perfectly contented with his ignorance and spiritual thraldom. No wonder then that the modern Muslim in Turkey, Egypt, and Persia is led to seek fresh sources of energy in the creation of new loyalties, such as patriotism and nationalism which Nietzsche described as 'sickness and unreason', and 'the strongest force against culture'.[12] Disappointed of a purely religious method of spiritual renewal which alone brings us into touch with the everlasting fountain of life and power by expanding our thought and emotion, the modern Muslim fondly hopes to unlock fresh sources of energy by narrowing down his thought and emotion. Modern atheistic socialism, which possesses all the fervour of a new religion, has a broader outlook; but having received its philosophical basis from the Hegelians of the left wing, it rises in revolt against the very source which could have given it strength and purpose. Both nationalism and atheistic socialism, at least in the present state of human adjustments, must draw upon the psychological forces of hate, suspicion, and resentment which tend to impoverish the soul of man and close up his hidden sources of spiritual energy. Neither the technique of medieval mysticism, nor nationalism, nor atheistic socialism can cure the ills of a despairing humanity. Surely the present moment is one of great crisis in the history of modern culture. The modern world stands in need of biological renewal. And religion, which in its higher manifestations is neither dogma, nor priesthood, nor ritual, can alone ethically prepare the modern man for the burden of the great responsibility which the advancement of modern science necessarily involves, and restore to him that attitude of faith which makes him capable of winning a personality here and retaining it hereafter. It is only by rising to a fresh vision of his origin and future, his whence and whither, that man will eventually triumph over a society motivated by an inhuman competition, and a civilization which has lost its spiritual unity by its inner conflict of religious and political values.

As I have indicated before,[13] religion as a deliberate enterprise to seize the ultimate principle of value and thereby to reintegrate the forces of one's own personality, is a fact which cannot be denied. The whole religious literature of the world, including the records of specialists' personal experiences, though perhaps expressed in the thought-forms of an out-of-date psychology, is a standing testimony to it. These experiences are perfectly natural, like our normal experiences. The evidence is that they possess a cognitive value for the recipient, and, what is much more important, a capacity to centralize the forces of the ego and thereby to endow him with a new personality. The view that such experiences are neurotic or mystical will not finally settle the question of their meaning or value. If an outlook beyond physics is possible, we must courageously face the possibility, even though it may disturb or tend to modify our normal ways of life and thought. The interests of truth require that we must abandon our present attitude. It does not matter in the least if the religious attitude is originally determined by some kind of physiological disorder. George Fox may be a neurotic; but who can deny his purifying power in England's religious life of his day? Muhammad, we are told, was a psychopath.[14] Well, if a psychopath has the power to give a fresh direction to the course of human history, it is a point of the highest psychological interest to search his original experience which has turned slaves into leaders of men, and has inspired the conduct and shaped the career of whole races of mankind Judging from the various types of activity that emanated from the movement initiated by the Prophet of Islam, his spiritual tension and the kind of behaviour which issued from it, cannot be regarded as a response to a mere fantasy inside his brain. It is impossible to understand it except as a response to an objective situation generative of new enthusiasms, new organizations, new starting-points. If we look at the matter from the standpoint of anthropology it appears that a psychopath is an important factor in the economy of humanity's social organization. His way is not to classify facts and discover causes: he thinks in terms of life and movement with a view to create new patterns of behaviour for mankind. No doubt he has his pitfalls and illusions just as the scientist who relies on sense-experience has his pitfalls and illusions. A careful study of his method, however, shows that he is not less alert than the scientist in the matter of eliminating the alloy of illusion from his experience.

The question for us outsiders is to find out an effective method of inquiry into the nature and significance of this extraordinary experience. The Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, who laid the foundations of modern scientific history, was the first to seriously approach this side of human psychology and reached what we now call the idea of the subliminal self. Later, Sir William Hamilton in England and Leibniz in Germany interested themselves in some of the more unknown phenomena of the mind. Jung, however, is probably right in thinking that the essential nature of religion is beyond the province of analytic psychology. In his discussion of the relation of analytic psychology to poetic art, he tells us that the process of artistic form alone can be the object of psychology. The essential nature of art, according to him, cannot be the object of a psychological method of approach. 'A distinction', says Jung, "must also be made in the realm of religion; there also a psychological consideration is permissible only in respect of the emotional and symbolical phenomena of a religion, where the essential nature of religion is in no way involved, as indeed it cannot be. For were this possible, not religion alone, but art also could be treated as a mere sub-division of psychology."[15]

Yet Jung has violated his own principle more than once in his writings. The result of this procedure is that, instead of giving us a real insight into the essential nature of religion and its meaning for human personality, our modern psychology has given us quite a plethora of new theories which proceed on a complete misunderstanding of the nature of religion as revealed in its higher manifestations, and carry us in an entirely hopeless direction. The implication of these theories, on the whole, is that religion does not relate the human ego to any objective reality beyond himself; it is merely a kind of well-meaning biological device calculated to build barriers of an ethical nature round human society in order to protect the social fabric against the otherwise unrestrainable instincts of the ego. That is why, according to this newer psychology, Christianity has already fulfilled its biological mission, and it is impossible for the modern man to understand its orginal significance. Jung concludes:

"Most certainly we should still understand it, had our customs even a breath of ancient brutality, for we can hardly realize in this day the whirlwinds of the unchained libido which roared through the ancient Rome of the Caesars. The civilized man of the present day seems very far removed from that. He has become merely neurotic. So for us the necessities which brought forth Christianity have actually been lost, since we no longer understand their meaning. We do not know against what it had to protect us. For enlightened people, the so-called religiousness has already approached very close to a neurosis. In the past two thousand years Christianity has done its work and has erected barriers of repression, which protect us from the sight of our own sinfulness."[16]

This is missing the whole point of higher religious life. Sexual self-restraint is only a preliminary stage in the ego's evolution. The ultimate purpose of religious life is to make this evolution move in a direction far more important to the destiny of the ego than the moral health of the social fabric which forms his present environment. The basic perception from which religious life moves forward is the present slender unity of the ego, his liability to dissolution, his amenability to reformation and the capacity for an ampler freedom to create new situations in known and unknown environments. In view of this fundamental perception higher religious life fixes its gaze on experiences symbolic of those subtle movements of Reality which seriously affect the destiny of the ego as a possibly permanent element in the constitution of Reality. If we look at the matter from this point of view modern psychology has not yet touched even the outer fringe of religious life, and is still far from the richness and variety of what is called religious experience. In order to give you an idea of its richness and variety I quote here the substance of a passage from a great religious genius of the seventeenth century– Shaikh Aḥmad of Sirhind– whose fearless analytical criticism of contemporary Sufism resulted in the development of a new technique. All the various systems of Sufi technique in India came from Central Asia and Arabia; his is the only technique which crossed the Indian border and is still a living force in the Punjab, Afghanistan, and Asiatic Russia. I am afraid it is not possible for me to expound the real meaning of this passage in the language of modern psychology; for such language does not yet exist. Since, however, my object is simply to give you an idea of the infinite wealth of experience which the ego in his Divine quest has to sift and pass through, I do hope you will excuse me for the apparently outlandish terminology which possesses a real substance of meaning, but which was formed under the inspiration of a religious psychology developed in the atmosphere of a different culture. Coming now to the passage. The experience of one 'Abd al-Mu'min was described to the Shaikh as follows:

"Heavens and Earth and God's Throne and Hell and Paradise have all ceased to exist for me. When I look round I find them nowhere. When I stand in the presence of somebody I see nobody before me: nay even my own being is lost to me. God is infinite. Nobody can encompass Him; and this is the extreme limit of spiritual experience. No saint has been able to go beyond this":

On this the Shaikh replied: 'The experience which is described has its origin in the ever varying life of the *Qalb*; and it appears to me that the recipient of it has not yet passed even one fourth of the innumerable "Stations" of the *Qalb*. The remaining three-fourths must be passed through in order to finish the experiences of this first "Station" of spiritual life. Beyond this "Station" there are other "Stations" known as *Rūḥ, Sirr-i-Khafī*, and *Sirr-i Akhfā* , each of these "Stations" which together constitute what is technically called *'Ālam-i Amr* has its own characteristic states and experiences. After having passed through these "Stations" the seeker of truth gradually receives the illuminations of "Divine Names" and "Divine Attributes" and finally the illuminations of the Divine Essence.'[17]

Whatever may be the psychological ground of the distinctions made in this passage it gives us at least some idea of a whole universe of inner experience as seen by a great reformer of Islamic Sufism. According to him this 'Ālam-i Amr, i.e. 'the world of directive energy', must be passed through before one reaches that unique experience which symbolizes the purely objective. This is the reason why I say that modern psychology has not yet touched even the outer fringe of the subject. Personally, I do not at all feel hopeful of the present state of things in either biology or psychology. Mere analytical criticism with some understanding of the organic conditions of the imagery in which religious life has sometimes manifested itself is not likely to carry us to the living roots of human personality. Assuming that sex-imagery has played a role in the history of religion, or that religion has furnished imaginative means of escape from, or adjustment to, an unpleasant reality– these ways of looking at the matter cannot, in the least, affect the ultimate aim of religious life, that is to say, the reconstruction of the finite ego by bringing him into contact with an eternal life-process, and thus giving him a metaphysical status of which we can have only a partial understanding in the half-choking atmosphere of our present environment. If, therefore, the science of psychology is ever likely to possess a real significance for the life of mankind, it must develop an independent method calculated to discover a new technique better suited to the temper of our times. Perhaps a psychopath endowed with a great intellect– the combination is not an impossibility– may give us a clue to such a technique. In modern Europe, Nietzsche, whose life and activity form, at least to us Easterns, an exceedingly interesting problem in religious psychology, was endowed with some sort

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of a constitutional equipment for such an undertaking. His mental history is not without a parallel in the history of Eastern Sufism. That a really 'imperative' vision of the Divine in man did come to him, cannot be denied. I call his vision "imperative" because it appears to have given him a kind of prophetic mentality which, by some kind of technique, aims at turning its visions into permanent life-forces. Yet Nietzsche was a failure; and his failure was mainly due to his intellectual progenitors such as Schopenhauer, Darwin, and Lange whose influence completely blinded him to the real significance of his vision. Instead of looking for a spiritual rule which would develop the Divine even in a plebeian and thus open up before him an infinite future, Nietzsche was driven to seek the realization of his vision in such schemes as aristocratic radicalism.[18] As I have said of him elsewhere:

The 'I am' which he seeketh,
Lieth beyond philosophy, beyond knowledge.
The plant that groweth only from the invisible soil of the heart of man, Groweth not from a mere heap of clay!'[19]

Thus failed a genius whose vision was solely determined by his internal forces, and remained unproductive for want of expert external guidance in his spiritual life;[20] and the irony of fate is that this man, who appeared to his friends 'as if he had come from a country where no man lived ', was fully conscious of his great spiritual need. 'I confront alone ', he says, 'an immense problem: it is as if I am lost in a forest, a primeval one. I need help. I need disciples: I need a master[21]. It would be so sweet to obey.' And again:

'Why do I not find among the living men who see higher than I do and have to look down on me? Is it only that I have made a poor search? And I have so great a longing for such.'

The truth is that the religious and the scientific processes, though involving different methods, are identical in their final aim. Both aim at reaching the most real. In fact, religion, for reasons which I have mentioned before, is far more anxious to reach the ultimately real than science.[22] And to both the way to pure objectivity lies through what may be called the purification of experience. In order to understand this we must make a distinction between experience as a natural fact, significant of the normally observable behaviour of Reality, and experience as significant of the inner nature of reality. As a natural fact it is explained in the light of its antecedents, psychological and physiological; as significant of the inner nature of reality we shall have to apply criteria of a different kind to clarify its meaning. In the domain of science we try to understand its meaning in reference to the external behaviour of reality; in the domain of religion we take it as representative of some kind of Reality and try to discover its meanings in reference mainly to the inner nature of that Reality. The scientific and the religious processes are in a sense parallel to each other. Both are really descriptions of the same world with this difference only that in the scientific process the ego's standpoint is necessarily exclusive, whereas in the religious process the ego integrates its competing tendencies and develops a single inclusive attitude resulting in a kind of synthetic transfiguration of his experiences. A careful study of the nature and purpose of these really complementary processes shows that both of them are directed to the purification of experience in their respective spheres. An illustration will make my meaning clear. Hume's criticism of our notion of cause must be considered as a chapter in the history of science rather than that of philosophy. True to the spirit of scientific empiricism we are not entitled to work with any concepts of a subjective nature. The point of Hume's criticism is to emancipate empirical science from the concept of force which, as he urges, has no foundation in sense-experience. This was the first attempt of the modern mind to purify the scientific process.

Einstein's mathematical view of the universe completes the process of purification started by Hume, and, true to the spirit of Hume's criticism, dispenses with the concept of force altogether.[23] The passage I have quoted from the great Indian saint shows that the practical student of religious psychology has a similar purification in view. His sense of objectivity is as keen as that of the scientist in his own sphere of objectivity. He passes from experience to experience, not as a mere spectator, but as a critical sifter of experience who by the rules of a peculiar technique, suited to his sphere of inquiry, endeavours to eliminate all subjective elements, psychological or physiological, in the content of his experience with a view finally to reach what is absolutely objective. This final experience is the revelation of a new life-process– original, essential, spontaneous. The eternal secret of the ego is that the moment he reaches this final revelation he recognizes it as the ultimate root of his being without the slightest hesitation. Yet in the experience itself there is no mystery. Nor is there anything emotional in it. Indeed with a view to secure a wholly non-emotional experience the technique of Islamic Sufism at least takes good care to forbid the use of music in worship, and to emphasize the necessity of daily congregational prayers in order to counteract the possible anti-social effects of solitary contemplation. Thus the experience reached is a perfectly natural experience and possesses a biological significance of the highest importance to the ego. It is the human ego rising higher than mere reflection, and mending its transiency by appropriating the eternal. The only danger to which the ego is exposed in this Divine quest is the possible relaxation of his activity caused by his enjoyment of and absorption in the experiences that precede the final experience. The history of Eastern Sufism shows that this is a real danger. This was the whole point of the reform movement initiated by the great Indian saint from whose writings I have already quoted a passage. And the reason is obvious. The ultimate aim of the ego is not to see something, but to be something. It is in the ego's effort to be something that he discovers his final opportunity to sharpen his objectivity and acquire a more fundamental 'I am' which finds evidence of its reality not in the Cartesian 'I think' but in the Kantian 'I can.' The end of the ego's quest is not emancipation from the limitations of individuality; it is, on the other hand, a more precise definition of it. The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpens his will with the creative assurance that the world is not something to be merely seen or known through concepts, but something to be made and re-made by continuous action. It is a moment of supreme bliss and also a moment of the greatest trial for the ego:

> Art thou in the stage of 'life', 'death', or 'death-in-life' Invoke the aid of three witnesses to verify thy 'Station.'
> The first witness is thine own consciousness–
> See thyself, then, with thine own light.
> The second witness is the consciousness of another ego-
> See thyself, then, with the light of an ego other than thee.
> The third witness is God's consciousness–
> See thyself, then, with God's light.
> If thou standest unshaken in front of this light,
> Consider thyself as living and. eternal as He!
> That man alone is real who dares–
> Dares to see God face to face!
> What is 'Ascension'? Only a search for a witness
> Who may finally confirm thy reality
> A witness whose confirmation alone makes thee eternal.
> No one can stand unshaken in His Presence;
> And he who can, verily, he is pure gold.
> Art thou a mere particle of dust?
> Tighten the knot of thy ego;
> And hold fast to thy tiny being!
> How glorious to burnish one's ego.
> And to test its lustre in the presence of the Sun!
> Re-chisel, then, thine ancient frame; And build up a new being.
> Such being is real being;
> Or else thy ego is a mere ring of smoke!
>
> Javīd Nāma

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Lecture was delivered in a meeting of the fifty-fourth session of the Aristotelian Society, London, held on 5 December 1932 with Professor J. Macmurray in the chair, followed by a discussion by Professor Macmurray and Sir Francis Young Husband– cf. 'Abstract of the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society for the Fifty-Fourth Session', in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (New Series), XXXIII (1933), 341. The Lecture was published in the said *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, pp. 47-64, as well as in *The Muslim Revival* (Lahore), I/iv (Dec. 1932), 329-49. It now forms the "Seventh Lecture" of Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1986.

[2] This is a reference to Allama Iqbal's own father, who was a devout Sufi; cf. S. Sulaimān Nadvī, *Sair-i Afghanistan*, p. 179; also S. Nadhīr Niyāzī, *Iqbāl ke Ḥuḍūr*, pp. 60-61. This great Sufistic idea later found expression in Allama's verse, viz. *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl* (Urdū), *Bāl-i Jibrīl*, Pt. II, Ghazal 60, v. 4:

ترے ضمیر پہ جب تک نہ ہو نزول کتاب
گرہ کشا ہے نہ رازی نہ صاحب کشاف

Unless the Book's each verse and part
Be revealed unto your heart,
Interpreters, though much profound,
Its subtle points cannot expound.

[3] Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason,* Introduction, section vi, pp. 57-58; also Kemp Smith *Commentary to Kant's 'Critique',* pp. 68-70. Metaphysics, if it means knowledge of the 'transcendent', or of things-in-themselves, was rejected by Kant as dogmatic, because it does not begin with a critical examination of human capacity for such knowledge. Reference

may here be made to one of the very significant jottings by Allama Iqbal on the closing back page of his own copy of Carl Rahn's *Science and the Religious Life* (London, 1928), viz. 'Is religion possible? Kant's problem'; cf. Muḥammad Ṣiddīq, *Descriptive Catalogue of Allama Iqbal's Personal Library,* pp. 21-22 and Plate No. 7.

[4] The 'principle of indeterminacy' was so re-christened by A.S. Eddington in his *Nature of the Physical World,* p. 220. Now more often known as 'principle of uncertainty' or 'uncertainty principle', it was 'announced' by the physicist philosopher Heisenberg in *Zeitschrift für Physik,* XLIII (1927), 172-98. Broadly speaking, the principle states that there is an inherent uncertainty in describing sub-microscopic processes. For instance, if the position of an electron is deter-mined, there remains a measure of uncertainty about its momentum. As in a complete casual description of a system both the properties must needs be accurately determined, many physicists and philosophers took this 'uncertainty' to mean that the principle of causality had been overthrown.

[5] Cf. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (ed. ʿAfīfī), I, 108, II. 11-12 – the words of 'the great Muslim Sufi philosopher' are: *al-khalqu maʿqūlun wa ʾl-Ḥaqqu maḥsūsun mashhūdun.* It is noteworthy that this profound mystical observation is to be found in one of Allama Iqbal's verses composed as early as 1903; cf. *Bāqīyāt-i Iqbāl,* p. 146, v. 2.

[6] For the Sufi doctrine of plurality of time and space stated in Lecture III, pp. 60-61 and Lecture V, pp. 107-10 on the basis of the then a rare Persian MS: *Ghāyat al-Imkān fī Drāyat al-Makān* (The Extent of Possibility in the Science of Space) ascribed by Allama Iqbal to the eminent Sufi poet (Fakhr al-Dīn) ʿIrāqī (d. 688/1289), see Lecture III, note 34; cf. also Allama's letter to Dr M. ʿAbdullāh Chaghatāʾī in *Iqbālnāmah,* II, 334.

[7] Cf. John Passamore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy, p.* 98. In fact both these pronouncements on metaphysics are to be found in Hans Vailhinger's work referred to in the next note. Vaihinger in his chapter on Nietzsche tells us that 'Lange's theory of metaphysics as a justified form of "poetry" made a deep impression upon Nietzsche' (p. 341) and he also alludes to Nietzsche's patiently asking himself: 'Why cannot we learn to look upon metaphysics and religion as the legitimate play of grown ups?' (p. 346, note). Both these passages are under-lined in Allama's personal copy of Vaihinger's work (cf. M. Siddiq, op. cit., p. 6).

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[8] This is a reference to the title: *The Philosophy of "As If"* (1924), translation of *Die Philosophic des Als Ob* (1911), a work of the German Kantian philosopher Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933). The "As if" philosophy known as fictionism is an extreme form of James's pragmatism or Dewey's instrumentalism; it, however, traces its descent from Kant through F. A. Lange and Nietzsche. It holds that as thought was originally an aid and instrument in struggle for existence it still is incapable of dealing with purely theoretical problems. Basic concepts and principles of natural sciences, economic and political theory, jurisprudence, ethics, etc., are merely convenient fictions devised by the human mind for practical purposes–practical life and intuition, in fact, are higher than speculative thought.

One meets quite a few observations bearing on Vaihinger's doctrine in Allama's writings, for example, the following passage in 'Note on Nietzsche': 'According to Nietzsche the "I" is a fiction. It is true that looked at from a purely intellectual point of view this conclusion is inevitable; Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* ends in the conclusion that God, immortality and freedom are mere fictions though useful for practical purposes. Nietzsche only follows Kant in this conclusion' *(Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal,* ed. S. A. Vahid, pp. 239-40)-

Also in 'McTaggart's Philosophy': 'Not William James but Kant was the real founder of modern pragmatism' (ibid., p. 119).

[9] For a comparative study of Indian, Greek, Muslim and modern theories of atomism, cf. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* II, 197-210, and for a more recent account of modern atomism Niels Bohr's article: 'Atom' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* II, 641-47.

[10] A. Eddington, *The Nature of Physical World,* chapter; 'Science and Mysticisim', p. 323.

[11] Nānikrām Vasanmal Thadānī, *The Garden of the East,* pp. 63-64. Cf. *Mathnawī, iii,* 3901-06, 3912-14, for Rūmī's inimitable lines on the theme of 'biological future of man' which Thadānī has presented here in a condensed form. Thadānī in the Preface to his book has made it clear that 'The poems .. . are not translations or renderings . . . ; they are rather intended to recreate the spirit and idea of each master...

[12] Cf. *The Joyful Wisdom,* Book V, where Nietzsche denounces 'nationalism and race-hatred (as) a scabies of the heart and blood poisoning',

also *The Twilight of the Idols,* chapter viii where he pronounces nationalism to be 'the strongest force against culture'.

[13] Cf. pp. 14546.

[14] Reference here is to the misguided observations of the orientalists to be found in such works as A. Sprenger, *Des Leben and die Lehre des Mohammed* (1861), 1, 207; D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (1905), p. 46; R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (1907), pp. 14748; and D.B. Macdonald, *Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (1909), p. 46.

[15] C. Jung, *Contribution to Analytical Psychology,* p. 225.

[16] Idem, *Psychology of the Unconscious, pp.* 42-43.

[17] Cf. Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt-i Rabbānī,* vol. I, Letter 253, also Letters 34, 257 and 260. In all these Letters there is listing of the five stations: *Qalb* (the 'heart'), *Rūḥ* (the 'spirit'), *Sirr* (the 'inner'), *Khafī* (the 'hidden'), and *Akhfā* (the 'hidden most'); together they have also been named as in Letter *34 Jawāhir-i Khamsah-i 'Ālam-i Amr* ('Five Essences of the Realm of the Spirit'). Cf. F. Rahman, *Selected Letters of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī,* chapter iii (pp. 54-55).

[18] Cf. *Stray Reflections,* ed. Dr Javid Iqbal, p. 42, where Nietzsche has been named as a 'great prophet of aristocracy'; also article: 'Muslim Democracy' *(Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal,* pp. 123-24), where a critical notice of Nietzsche's 'Aristocracy of Supermen' ends up in a very significant rhetorical question: 'Is not, then, the Democracy of early Islam an experimental refutation of the ideas of Nietzsche?'

[19] Cf. *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl (Fārsī), Javīd Nāmah, p.* 741, vv. 4 and 3. Compare this with Allama Iqbal's pronouncement on Nietzsche in his highly valuable article: 'McTaggart's Philosophy':

> 'A more serious thing happened to poor Nietzsche, whose peculiar intellectual environment led him to think that his vision of the Ultimate Ego could be realized in a world of space and time. What grows only out of the inner depths of the heart of man, he proposed to create by an artificial biological experiment' *(Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal, p.* 150).

Again in 'Note on Nietzsche': 'Nietzsche's Superman is a biological product. The Islamic perfect man is the product of moral and spiritual forces' *(Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal,* ed. S. A. Vahid, p. 242).

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[20] Allama Iqbal wished that Nietzsche were born in the times of Shaikh Would that he had lived in Aḥmad's time so that he might have attained eternal joy. (trans. Arberry)

کاش بودے در زمان احمدے
تارسیدے برسرور سرمدے

And he himself could be Nietzsche's spiritual mentor, were he be in Iqbal's times; see *Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl (Urdū), Bāl-i Jibrīl,* Pt. II, *Ghazal* 33, v. 5.

اگر ہوتا وہ مجذوب فرنگی اس زمانے میں
تو اقبال اس کو سمجھاتا مقام کبریا کیا ہے!

If that Frankish Sage
Were present in this age
Him *Iqbal* would teach
God's high place and reach
(trans. S. Akbar 'Alī Shāh).

[21] Cf. A. Schimmel, 'Some Thoughts about Future Studies of Iqbal,' *Iqbal,* XXIV/iv (1977), 4.

[22] Cf. pp. 145-46.

[23] Cf. Bertrand Russell, 'Relativity: Philosophical Consequences', Section: 'Force and Gravitation', *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* XIX, 99c.

The Allahabad Address 1930[1]

Muhammad Iqbal

Gentlemen,

I am deeply grateful to you for the honour you have conferred upon me in inviting me to preside over the deliberations of the All-India Muslim League at one of the most critical moments in the history of Muslim political thought and activity in India. I have no doubt that in this great assembly there are men whose political experience is far more extensive than mine. It will, therefore, be presumptuous on my part to claim to guide an assembly of such men in the political decisions which they are called upon to make today.

I lead no party; I follow no leader. I have given the best part of my life to a careful study of Islam, its law and polity, its culture, its history and its literature. This constant contact with the spirit of Islam as it unfolds itself in time, has, I think, given me a kind of insight into its significance as a world-fact.[2] It is in the light of this insight, whatever its value that I propose to attempt the humble task of bringing clearly to your consciousness the main principle which, in my opinion, should determine the general character of these decisions.

Islam and Nationalism

It cannot be denied that Islam, regarded as an ethical ideal plus a certain kind of polity has been the chief formative factor in the life-history of the Muslims of India. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that India is perhaps the only country in the world where Islam as a people-building force has worked at its best.

The ideas set free by European political thinking, however, are now rapidly changing the outlook of the present generation of Muslims both in India and outside India. Our younger men are anxious to see them as living forces in their own countries without any critical appreciation of their evolution in Europe.

In Europe, Christianity was understood to be a purely monastic order which gradually developed into a vast Church-organisation. The protest of Luther was directed against this Church-organisation, not against any system of polity of a secular nature, for the obvious reason that there was no such polity associated with Christianity. And Luther was perfectly justified in rising in revolt against this organisation though, I think, he did not realize that his revolt would eventually mean the complete displacement of universal ethics of Jesus by the growth of a plurality of national and hence narrower systems of ethics. Thus the upshot of the intellectual movement initiated by such men as Rousseau and Luther was the transformation of a human into a national outlook. The conclusion to which Europe is consequently driven is that religion is a private affair of the individual and has nothing to do with what is called man's temporal life.

Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter.[3] In Islam God and the universe, spirit and matter, church and state, are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam matter is spirit realizing itself in space and time.

A Luther in the world of Islam is an impossible phenomenon for here there is no Church-organisation[4] similar to that of Christianity in the Middle Ages. In the world of Islam we have a universal polity whose fundamentals are believed to have been revealed but whose structure stands today in need of renewed power by fresh adjustments.[5]

I do not know what will be the final fate of the national idea in the world of Islam— whether Islam will assimilate and transform it or allow a radical transformation of its own structure by the force of this idea. At the present moment the national idea is racializing the outlook of Muslims and thus materially counteracting the humanizing work of Islam.

Do not think that the problem I am indicating is a purely theoretical one. It is a very living and practical problem calculated to affect the very fabric of Islam as a system of life and conduct. On a proper solution of it alone depends your future as a distinct cultural unit in India.

The Question of Unity

Is it possible to retain Islam as an ethical ideal and to reject it as a polity in favour of national polities in which religious attitude is not permitted to play any part? This question becomes of special importance in India where the Muslims happen to be in a minority.

The nature of the Prophet's religious experience as disclosed in the Qur'ān is individual experience creative of a social order. Its immediate outcome is the fundamentals of a polity with implicit legal concepts whose civic significance cannot be belittled merely because their origin is revelational.[6] The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically related to the social order which it has created. The rejection of the one will eventually involve the rejection of the other.

Therefore, the construction of a polity on national lines if it means a displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity is simply unthinkable to a Muslim. Experience shows that the various caste units and religious units in India have shown no inclination to sink their respective individualities in a larger whole. Each group is intensely jealous of its collective existence. The unity of an Indian nation therefore must be sought not in the negation but in the mutual harmony and cooperation of the many.[7] True statesmanship cannot ignore facts, however unpleasant they may be. The only practical course is not to assume the existence of a state of things which does not exist but to recognize facts as they are and to exploit them to our greatest advantage. And it is on the discovery of Indian unity in this direction that the fate of India as well as of Asia really depends.

It is, however, painful to observe that our attempts to discover such a principle of internal harmony have so far failed. Why have they failed? Perhaps we suspect each other's intentions and inwardly aim at dominating each other. Perhaps we cannot afford to part with monopolies which circumstances have placed in our hands. Perhaps we are unwilling to recognize that each group has a right to free development according to its own cultural traditions. But whatever may be the causes of our failure I still feel hopeful. Events seem to be tending in the direction of some sort of internal harmony. I have no hesitation in declaring that if the principle that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition is recognized, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India.

The principle that each group is entitled to free development on its own lines is not inspired by any feeling of narrow communalism. There are communalisms and communalisms. A community which is inspired by feeling of ill-will towards other communities is low and ignoble. I entertain the highest respect for the customs, laws, religious and social institutions of other communities. Nay, it is my duty, according to the teachings of the Qur'ān, even to defend their places of worship if need be. Yet I love the communal group which is source of my life and behaviour, and which has formed me what I am by giving me its religion, its literature, its thought, its culture, and thereby recreating its whole past as a living operative factor in my present consciousness.

Muslim India within India

Communalism in its higher aspect is indispensable to the formation of a harmonious whole in a country like India.

India is a continent in human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages and professing different religions. Even the Hindus do not form a homogeneous group. The principle of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognizing the fact of communal groups.

The Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is therefore perfectly justified. The resolution of the All-Parties Muslim Conference at Delhi is, to my mind, wholly inspired by this noble ideal of a harmonious whole.

Personally I would go further than the demands embodied in it. I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan[8] amalgamated into a single state.[9] Self-Government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of the North-West India.

The proposal was put forward before the Nehru Committee.[10] They rejected it on the ground that if carried into effect, it would give a very unwieldy state.[11]

This is true in so far as the area is concerned. In point of population the state contemplated by the proposal would be much less than some of the present Indian provinces. The exclusion of Ambala Division and perhaps of some districts where non-Muslims predominate will make it less extensive and more Muslim in population– so that the exclusion suggested will enable this consolidated state to give a more effective protection to non-Muslim minorities within its area.[12]

The idea need not alarm the Hindus or the British. Possessing full opportunity of development within the bodypolitic of India, the North-West Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion the one of ideas or of bayonets.

Nor should the Hindus fear that the creation of autonomous Muslim states will mean the introduction of a kind of religious rule in such states. The truth is that Islam is not a church. It is state, conceived as a contractual organism long before Rousseau ever thought of such a thing, and animated by an ethical ideal which regards man not as an earth-rooted creature defined by this or that portion of the earth but as a spiritual being. The character of a Muslim state can be judged from what the *Times of India* pointed out sometime ago in a leader on the Indian Banking Inquiry Committee. "In ancient India," the paper points out, "the state framed laws regulating the rates of interest; but in Muslim times, although Islam clearly forbids the realization of interest on money loaned, Indian Muslim states imposed no restrictions on such rates."

I, therefore, demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interests of India and Islam. For India it means security and peace resulting from the internal balance of power. For Islam an opportunity to rid itself of the stamp that Arabian Imperialism was forced to give it, to mobilize its law, its education, its culture, and to bring them into closer contact with its own original spirit and with the spirit of modern times.[13]

Federal states

Thus it is clear that in view of India's infinite variety in climates, races, languages, creeds and social systems, the creation of autonomous states based on the unity of language, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests is the only possible way to secure a stable constitutional structure in India.

The conception of federation underlying the Simon Report[14] necessitates the abolition of the Central Legislative Assembly as a popular assembly and makes it an assembly of the representatives of federal states. It further demands a redistribution of territory on the lines which I have indicated. I give my whole-hearted support to this view of the matter and venture to suggest that the redistribution recommended in the Simon Report must fulfill two conditions. It must precede the introduction of the new constitution and must be so devised as to finally solve the communal problem.

Proper redistribution will make the question of joint and separate electorates[15] automatically disappear from the constitutional controversy of India. It is the present structure of the provinces that is largely responsible for this controversy.

Federation as understood in the Simon Report

But in so far as the question of the powers of the Central Federal States is concerned there is a subtle difference of motive in the constitutions proposed by the Pundits of India and the Pundits of England.

The Pundits of India do not disturb the central authority as it stands at present. All that they desire is that this authority should become fully responsible to the Central Legislature which they maintain intact.

The Pundits of England, on the other hand, have shifted the experiment of democracy from the centre to the provinces. In so far as real federation is concerned, the Simon Report virtually negatives the principle of federation in its true significance.

To my mind a unitary form of Government is simply unthinkable in a self-governing India. What is called 'residuary powers'[16] must be left entirely to self-governing states, the Central Federal State exercising only those powers which are expressly vested in it by the free consent of federal states. I would never advise the Muslims of India to agree to a system, whether of British or of Indian origin, which virtually negatives the principle of true federation, or fails to recognize them as a distinct political entity.

Federal scheme

The announcement of the participation of the Indian Princes in the Round Table Conference was a kind of surprise to the people of India, particularly the minorities.[17]

The truth is that the participation of the Indian Princes–. among whom only a few are Muslims – in a federation scheme serves a double purpose. On the one hand it serves as an all-important factor in maintaining the British power in India practically as it is, on the other hand it gives overwhelming majority to the Hindus in an All-India Federal Assembly. It appears to me that the Hindu-Muslim differences regarding the ultimate form of the Central Government are being cleverly exploited by British politicians through the agency of the Princes who see in the scheme prospects of better security for their despotic rule.

If the Muslims silently agree to any such scheme it will simply hasten their end as a political entity in India. The policy of the Indian Federation thus created will be practically controlled by Hindu Princes forming the largest group in the Central Federal Assembly. They will always lend their support to the Crown in matters of Imperial concern and in so far as internal administration of the country is concerned they will help in maintaining and strengthening the supremacy of the Hindus.

In other words the scheme appears to be aiming at a kind of understanding between Hindu India and the British Imperialism: you perpetuate me in India and I in return give you a Hindu oligarchy to keep all other Indian communities in perpetual subjection.

If therefore the British Indian provinces are not transformed into really autonomous states, the Princes' participation in a scheme of Indian federation will be interpreted only as a dexterous move on the part of British politicians to satisfy, without parting with any real power, all parties concerned – Muslims with the word federation, Hindus with a majority in the centre, and British Imperialists (whether Tory or Labourite)[18] with the substance of real power.

The best course, I think, would have been to start with a British Indian Federation only. A federal scheme born of an unholy union between democracy and despotism cannot but keep British India in the same vicious circle of a unitary Central Government.

Problem of Defense

The other difficult problem which confronts the successful working of a federal system in India is the problem of India's defence.[19]

In their discussion of this problem the Royal Commissioners[20] have marshalled all the deficiencies of India in order to make out a case for Imperial administration of the army. "India and Britain," say the Commissioners, "are so related that India's defence cannot be regarded as a matter of purely Indian concern. The control and direction of such an army must rest in the hands of agents of the Imperial Government."

Further, they emphasize that "the obvious fact that India is not a single nation is nowhere made more plain than in considering the difference between the martial races of India and the rest."[21]

These features of the question have been emphasized in order to demonstrate that the British are not only keeping India secure from foreign menace but are also the "neutral guardians of internal security."[22]

However, in federated India, as I understand federation, the problem will have only one aspect, i.e. external defence. Apart from provincial armies necessary for maintaining internal peace the Indian Federal Congress can maintain, on the North-West Frontier, a strong Indian Frontier Army, composed of units recruited from all provinces and officered by efficient and experienced military men taken from all communities.

I know that India is not in possession of efficient military officers and I venture to ask who is responsible for the present state of things? Is it due to some inherent incapacity of our martial races or to the slowness of the process of military training? The military capacity of our martial races is undeniable. The process of military training may be slow as compared to other processes of human training. I am no military expert to judge this matter. But as a layman I feel that the argument, as stated, assumes the process to be practically endless. This means perpetual bondage for India and makes it all the more necessary that the Frontier Army, as suggested by the Nehru Report, be entrusted to the charge of a committee of defence the personnel of which may be settled by mutual understanding.

Again it is significant that the Simon Report has given extraordinary importance to the question of India's land frontier, but has made only passing references to its naval position. India has doubtless had to face invasions from her land frontier; but it is obvious that her present masters took possession of her on account of her defenceless sea coast.[23] A self-governing and free India will in these days have to take greater care of her sea coast than her land frontiers.

I have no doubt that if a Federal Government is established, Muslim federal states will willingly agree, for purposes of India's defence, to the creation of neutral Indian military and naval forces.

Such a neutral military force for the defence of India was a reality in the days of Mughal Rule. Indeed in the time of Akbar the Indian frontier was defended by armies officered by Hindu generals. I am perfectly sure that the scheme of a neutral Indian army based on a federated India will intensify Muslim patriotic feeling and finally set at rest the suspicion, if any, of Indian Muslims joining Muslims from beyond the frontier in the event of any invasion.

The alternative

I have thus tried briefly to indicate the way in which the Muslims of India ought, in my opinion, to look at the two most important constitutional problems of India.[24]

A redistribution of British India calculated to secure a permanent solution of the communal problem is the main demand of the Muslims of India. If, however, the Muslim demand of a territorial solution of the communal problem is ignored, then I support, as emphatically as possible, the Muslim demands repeatedly urged by the All-India Muslim League and the All-India Muslim Conference.

The Muslims of India cannot agree to any constitutional changes which affect their majority rights in the Punjab and Bengal or fail to guarantee them 33 per cent representation in any Central Legislature.[25]

There were two pitfalls into which Muslim political leaders fell. The first was the repudiated Lucknow Pact[26] which originated in a false view of Indian nationalism, and the second is the narrow-visioned sacrifice of Islamic solidarity in the interest of Punjab Ruralism resulting in a proposal which virtually reduces the Punjab Muslims to a position of minority. It is the duty of the League to condemn both the Pact and the proposal.

Nor can the Muslims of India agree to any such changes which fail to create at least Sind as a separate province and treat the North-West Frontier Province as a province of inferior political status.[27] I see no reason why Sind should not be united with Baluchistan and turned into a separate province. It has nothing in common with the Bombay Presidency. Considering further the nature of her agricultural problems and her infinite commercial possibilities dependent on the inevitable growth of Karachi into a second metropolis of India,[28] it is unwise to keep her attached to a Presidency which, though friendly today, is likely to become a rival. Financial difficulties, we are told, stand in the way of separation. I do not know of any definite authoritative pronouncement on the matter. But, assuming there are any such difficulties, I see no reason why the Government of India should not give temporary financial help to a promising province in her struggle for independent progress.

As to the North-West Frontier Province, it is painful to note that the Royal Commissioners have practically denied that the people of this province have any right to Reform. The inherent right of the Afghan to light a cigarette is curtailed merely because he happens to be living in a powder house.[29] The Royal Commissioners' epigrammatic argument is pleasant enough but far from convincing. Political reform is light, not fire, and to light every human being is entitled whether he happens to live in a powder house or a coal mine.

What has recently happened in that unfortunate province is the result of a step-motherly treatment shown to the people. Indeed the Afghan is by instinct more fitted for democratic institutions than any other people in India.[30]

Round Table Conference

I think I am now called upon to make a few observations on the Round Table Conference.[31] Personally, I do not feel optimistic as to the results of this conference. It was hoped that away from the actual scene of the communal strife, and in a changed atmosphere, better councils would prevail and a genuine settlement of the differences between the two major communities of India would bring India's freedom within sight.[32] Actual events, however, tell a different tale.

Indeed the discussion of the communal question in London has demonstrated, more clearly than ever, the essential disparity between the two great cultural units of India. Yet the Prime Minister of England apparently refuses to see that the problem of India is international and not national.

I am glad to be able to say that our Muslim delegates fully realize the importance of a proper solution of what I call India's international problem. They are perfectly justified in pressing for a solution of the communal question before the question of responsibility in the Central Government is finally settled. No Muslim politician should be sensitive to the taunt embodied in that propaganda word – communalism – expressively devised to exploit the British democratic sentiment and to mislead England into assuming a state of things which does not really exist in India.

Nor should the Muslim leaders and politicians allow themselves to be carried away by the subtle but fallacious argument that Turkey and Persia and other Muslim countries are progressing on national i.e. territorial lines. The Muslims of India are differently situated. The countries of Islam outside India are practically wholly Muslim in population. The minorities there belong, in the language of the Qur'ān, to the 'people of the Book.[33] There are no social barriers between Muslims and the 'people of the Book.' Indeed the first practical step that Islam took towards the realization of a final combination of humanity was to call upon peoples possessing practically the same ethical ideal to come forward and combine. The Qur'ān declares, "O people of the Book! Come let us join together on the 'word' (Unity of God), that is common to us all." The wars of Islam and Christianity, and later, European aggression in its various forms could not allow the infinite meaning of this verse to work itself out in the world of Islam. Today it is being gradually being realized in the countries of Islam in the shape of what is called Muslim Nationalism.

It is hardly necessary for me to add that the soul test of the success of our delegates is the extent to which they are able to get the non-Muslim delegates of the Conference to agree to our demands as embodied in the Delhi Resolution.[34]

If these demands are not agreed to, then a question of a very great and far-reaching importance will arise for the community. Then will arrive the moment for an independent and concerted political action by the Muslims of India. If you are at all serious about your ideals and aspirations you must be ready for such an action.

Let me tell you frankly that at the present moment the Muslims of India are suffering from two evils. The first is the want of personalities. Sir Malcolm Hailey[35] and Lord Irvin were perfectly correct in their diagnosis when they told the Aligarh University that the community had failed to produce leaders. By leaders I mean men who by Divine gift or experience possess a keen perception of the spirit and destiny of Islam along with an equally keen perception of the trend of modern history. Such men are really the driving forces of a people but they are God's gift and cannot be made to order.

The second evil from which the Muslims of India are suffering is that the community is fast losing what is called the herd-instinct.[36] This lack of the herd-instinct makes it possible for individuals and groups to start independent careers without contributing to the general thought and activity of the community.

The remedy of the first evil is not in our hands. As to the second evil I think it is possible to discover a remedy. I have got definite views on the subject but I think it is proper to postpone their expression till the apprehended situation actually arises.

The conclusion

Gentlemen, I have finished. In conclusion I cannot but impress upon you that the present crisis in the history of India demands complete organisation and unity of will and purpose in the Muslim community, both in your own interest as a community and in the interest of India as a whole.

The political bondage of India has been and is a source of infinite misery to the whole of Asia. It has suppressed the spirit of the East and wholly deprived her of that joy of self-expression which once made her the creator of a great and glorious culture. We have a duty towards India where we are destined to live and die. We have a duty towards Asia, especially Muslim Asia.

Since 70 millions of Muslims in a single country constitute a far more valuable asset to Islam than all the countries of Muslim Asia put together we must look at the Indian problem not only from the Muslim point of view but also from the standpoint of the Indian Muslim as such. I am not hopeless of an inter-communal understanding but I cannot conceal from you the feeling that in the near future our community may be called upon to adopt an independent line of action to cope with the present crisis. An independent line of political action in such a crisis is possible only to a determined people, possessing a will focalized by a single purpose. Is it possible for you to achieve the organic wholeness of a unified will? Yes, it is. Rise above sectional interests and private ambitions, and pass from matter to spirit. Matter is diversity; sprit is light, life and unity.

One lesson I have learnt from the history of Muslims. At critical moments in their history it is Islam that has saved Muslims and not vice versa. If today you focus your vision on Islam and seek inspiration from the ever-vitalizing idea embodied in it, you will be only reassembling your scattered forces, regaining your lost integrity, and thereby saving yourself from total destruction.

One of the profoundest verses in the Holy Qur'ān teaches us that the birth and rebirth of the whole of humanity is like the birth and rebirth of a single individual. Why cannot you who, as a people, can well claim to be the first practical exponent of this superb conception of humanity, live and move and have your being as a single individual?

I do not mystify anybody when I say that things in India are not what they appear to be. The meaning of this, however, will dawn upon you only when you have achieved a real collective ego to look at them. In the words of the Qur'ān, "Hold fast to yourself. No one who errs can hurt you, provided you are well-guided." (5:104)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] *Iqbal presided over the annual session of the All India Muslim League on 29–30 December 1930 at Allahabad. His presidential address, popularly known as 'The Allahabad Address,' became one of the most important documents in the history of Muslims in India: it became the foundation stone of a new country in the region, Pakistan. Not only that, it also articulated the view point of the founding father of Pakistan about the crucial question of cultural and religious diversity.*

[2] Apparently this is coming out of his long held conviction that some ideals of Islam remained undiscovered so far. In the *Javīdnāma,* which was being written around the same time, Jamāluddin Afghānī is presented to interpret the Qur'ān as a source of alternate worlds, any of which may be picked up and materialized.

The phrase "world-fact" is apparently rooted in the idea that Islam was not a monopoly of one community: even a non-Muslim with keen insight would reach upon the principles generously revealed to the Muslims through the Qur'ān.

[3] The idea finds its best expression through the imaginary civilization on Mars in *Javīdnāma.* Tyranny, oppression and poverty are unknown in that world, where people are capable of experiencing matter and spirit as one.

[4] According to Iqbal the finality of the Prophet also implies an end to priesthood: "The abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'ān, and the emphasis that it lays on Nature and History as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality." *(The Reconstruction)*

[5] He means to say that the Muslim society is a "universal polity" but is now lacking in power because its legal system hasn't been kept up to date. Here, he is directly building up on his sixth lecture, 'The Principle of Movement in Islam' in *The Reconstruction.*

[6] Iqbal believed that a philosophical test of religious experience was possible but required the involvement of not only the mind, but also the intuitive faculties. This issue is discussed in detail in the first two lectures of *The Reconstruction.*

[7] "The unity of an Indian nation... cooperation of the many." This could

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be the solution acceptable to Iqbal and like-minded Muslim leaders as an alternative to the partition of India. Congress' refusal to come to any reasonable terms convinced them that partition was the only way out.

[8] The spellings of Sind and Baluchistan were officially changed to 'Sindh' and 'Balochistan' by the respective assemblies of the two provinces after independence.

[9] This is the most oft-quoted passage on the basis of which this address is regarded as the foundation stone of Pakistan.

[10] In 1928, political parties from all over India met in Delhi and appointed a Committee to prepare suggestions for the future constitution of India, so that those could be presented to the British. The Committee was headed by Motilal Nehru (the father of Jawaharlal Nehru who later became the first Prime Minister of India). The suggestions of the Nehru Committee were called the Nehru Report.

[11] Two proposals of amalgamation were mentioned in the 3rd Chapter of the Nehru Report. The first was to combine Punjab and the NWFP, about which the Nehru Committee held no objection as long as it were acceptable to all concerned parties. As it was unacceptable even to one of the Hindu members of the Committee, no recommendation was made in that regard.

The second proposal, to which Iqbal is referring here, was mentioned in the Report in these words: "A similar but more far reaching proposal was made to us, recommending that the Punjab, the NWFP province, Baluchistan and Sind should all be amalgamated together, and that there should be no reservation of seats, unless the minority desires it, in the area. We were unable to entertain this proposal. It would mean the creation of an unwieldy province sprawling all over the north and north west."

[12] Iqbal seemed to firmly believe that a Muslim majority freed from its fears would extend fair and generous treatment towards the minorities.

[13] . "For India... the spirit of modern times." This was, then, the principle of policy he recommended for the proposed Muslim state.

[14] The Royal Commission headed by Sir Simon presented its report in 1930. It consisted of seventeen volumes.

[15] Muslim demand for separate electorates was an old one. It was accepted by the British in 1909 through the Minto-Morley Reforms and by the Congress in 1916 through the Lucknow Pact with the Muslim

League. The nationalists, however, remained averse to the idea and by 1927 the Muslims adapted a new position. This proposition, basically a brainchild of Jinnah, is reiterated here, i.e. the Muslims would drop their demand if certain other constitutional safeguards were provided.

[16] Residuary powers were demanded to be with provinces in February 1928.

[17] The East India Company had enacted treaties with many native 'Princes'. When it handed over India to the British Crown in 1858, the Crown honoured many of those treaties and such Princes were allowed to keep their territories, which were called the 'princely states.' The princes were generally loyal to the British, to whom they owed all power, and they were not obliged to introduce democratic reforms in their states at the same pace as the British India. Therefore, it came as a surprise when they were also invited by the Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald to participate in the Round Table Conference, which was initially understood to be an affair of the politicians of the British India only.

[18] i.e., the Conservative and Labour parties of Britain. The Labour Party was usually perceived as more considerate to the Indian demand for freedom (and a Labour Government eventually passed the Independence of India Act, 1947).

[19] He is referring to the British argument that if too much control is given to the provinces then the country would not be able to defend itself against foreign invaders and the provinces might also fight with each other. The British argued that for this reason they must not only stay in the country but also maintain a strong Centre that could effectively control the provinces. In Iqbal's view, such a situation would naturally benefit the Hindus more than the Muslims, because the Hindus were in majority and more likely to exercise influence in the Centre. The Muslim interest lied in greater provincial autonomy so that they could enjoy power at least in the provinces where they were in majority.

[20] i.e. the members of the Simon Commission

[21] They meant that certain races in India, such as the Punjabis and the Gurkhas, had a natural ability to become better soldiers while certain other Indian races completely lacked such ability.

[22] The foreign menace could possibly include the Russians and the Afghans, for instance. The British argued that even if the foreigners

didn't invade India, the so-called martial races within the country would indulge in aggression against the so-called non-martial races if the British left India.

[23] The British arrived in India through the sea-route. The Mughals and the other native rulers did not have a navy to match the British power at the sea.

[24] i.e., the distribution of powers between the Centre and the provinces, and the issue of defence.

[25] In those assemblies where Muslims had a narrow majority (for instance, Punjab), there was always a danger of losing this superiority through some tricky constitutional haggling. The 33% minimum representation of Muslims in all Central Legislatures was a constitutional safeguard so that they could have some say at the Centre too.

[26] The pact was made between the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916 through the efforts of Jinnah (hence winning him the epithet of 'the Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity'). It secured separate electorates for the Muslims but bartered away their dominance in the majority provinces for a slight increase in the number of reserved seats in the minority provinces.

[27] Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency and introduction of political reforms in the NWFP were popular Muslim demands and were even accepted in the Nehru Report.

[28] The first metropolis being Bombay.

[29] This analogy was used by the British to explain that the NWFP could not be granted substantial political reforms due to security concerns (the perceived Russian threat and the history of periodical wars between the British and the Afghans)

[30] Perhaps he means that the tribal customs recognize fewer barriers between the chief and his people.

[31] The First Round Table Conferences had already started on November 12. The Congress did not participate due to its overall non-cooperation with the British. Iqbal participated in the second (1931) and the third (1932) conferences.

[32] "...would bring India's freedom within sight." This phrase is starkly reminiscent of a line from Jinnah's speech in the plenary of the Round Table Conference on November 12. He electrified most listeners by implying that in the Conference itself "the Dominion Prime Ministers

and their representatives" will "witness the birth of a new Dominion of India..." Iqbal must have read that statement in newspapers.

[33] 'People of the Book' refers to the followers of other divine religions. The Qur'ān regards Jews and Christians as such people but the category was expanded by the Muslim jurists after the conquest of Persia to also include the Zoroastrians. Buddhists and Hindus in India were regarded as 'people of the Book' for the purpose of taxation by the Muslim rulers (*jizya* could only be levied upon the people of the Book, since a complete non-believer could not be a citizen of a Muslim state according to a strict interpretation of the law). In other spheres of life the mainstream Muslim tendency was to regard Hinduism as a pagan religion although many Sufi currents appealed for a deeper understanding. Liberal interfaith views consistently find place in Iqbal's poetry and prose, hence his reference to the Hindus as non-believers (i.e. not 'people of the Book') here could be more of an indication of ground reality rather than his own philosophical position.

[34] Resolution passed at the All India Muslim Conference, Delhi.

[35] Sir Malcolm Hailey (1872–1962) was the Governor of UP, 1928–34). Lord Irvin was the Viceroy of India at that time.

[36] The term is used here in a positive sense.

UNLOCKING THE DOORS

NEW KEYS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE SETTLED CONVICTIONS

UNLOCKING THE DOORS

PERSPECTIVES ON SETTLED CONVICTIONS— CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

This part tries to capture some of the essential insights that inform the debates and discourses occupying the centre stage ever since the events of 11th September 2000. There is no claim to originality as we do not believe in the idea of "originality" in its modern sense and know very well that almost every thing of real substance has already been said; it is only a question of providing new keys to the understanding, keys that are more suitable to unlock certain doors of comprehension.

This part does not attempt to share with the readers the information that "after *11th September* books about Islam have risen to the elevated status of best sellers on the Bookseller lists in greater numbers" and, "according to the official sources, the number of people converting to Islam in the US has increased four times". One can find these facts and figures with a few strokes of keys after spending some time in the cyberspace. Nor

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is there any need to alert the readers to the fact that Islam is a humane religion, the literal and symbolic meaning of *Islam* is "peace" "submission" or "surrender" or that the basic meaning of the term *Jihād* is "struggle" or "exerting one's utmost effort"; wholehearted, dedicated effort which strains every sinew of our being on every level or that there is a lesser *Jihād* and a greater *Jihād*. These pious platitudes are now being offered every where to the extent that amidst a flood of these "apologetics" we have started receiving responses from the West which tell us that, instead of trying to convince the West of the merits of Islam, we should rather instruct our misinformed Muslim friends in all these nice aspects of the Islamic religion!

To begin, let us make a few remarks about the "Theological Roots of Peace and War" with a view to bring out Islam's actual views on peace and war and to point out that since religion does not acknowledge any principles higher than its own, not even the survival of the human race, if asked to establish peace, it will do so in its own way or not at all. Moreover, though God in Himself is One, He takes on a variety of relationships with His creatures. He is the Life-Giver and Slayer, the Exalter and the Abaser, the Benefiter and the Harmer, the Forgiver and the Avenger. At any given moment every creature is related to these and other pairs of opposing Divine Names. Life has been given to us in this world and before long it will be taken away. We are exalted above some of our fellow creatures in wealth, power, and intelligence, but abased before others. We have received many benefits and suffered many ills. The ontological roots of every situation we experience derive from the Divine Nature.

The world displays a certain conflict and strife as a result of the opposition among Divine Names such as the Abaser and the Exalter, even though the activities of these two Names go back to the One God. This sort of opposition among the Names might be called "horizontal", where as there is a second kind of opposition among the Names that might be called "vertical" of which the relationship of Divine Mercy to Divine Wrath is an example. In this context one could outline two kinds of peace and two kind of war:

1. Peace with God.
2. Peace with caprice and this world.
3. War for God's sake.
4. War against God

To summarise, war and strife accompany human beings in the present world because they and all created things are evanescent and perishing. The changing nature of all creatures brings about opposition and conflict. To make the most of this conflict people must put themselves in harmony with Peace (*salām*), the Divine Reality. In function of Peace they can struggle to bring relative harmony into the world by performing wholesome works and thereby eliminating "corruption". As long as people want to remain human, they are forced to engage in the greater and inward struggle.

Secondly, a word about the question of "Tolerance and Intolerance" would not be amiss here. One can discuss the metaphysical roots of Tolerance and Intolerance at length and could show as to how these principles manifested in history and how the present challenge to the Muslim world is reversed in the sense that it must learn to be tolerant of a world which threatens its very existence without losing its identity and the secularised West must learn the very difficult lesson that its modernised understanding of man and the world is not universal. But that is not the real aim of the present writing.

The topic of "Terrorism" also invites attention. Why is it so that while Islam has a clear definition of terrorism yet distinction must be made between what Islam teaches and what Muslims think and do? At the same time, differences of opinion among present-day Muslims as to what in fact Islam does teach— especially when it is a question of applying these teachings to the contemporary situation— run deep. It was also interesting to note that not only in its recent session but since the last two decades the UN has not been able to reach a consensus on the definition of terrorism.

All these ideas are, however, dropped in favour of other topics that we thought more relevant and appropriate for the occasion though we would have the chance to allude to the issues mentioned just now.

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Profane conflicts— unholy wars— take place in the midst of chaos. The Prophet said that one of the signs of the end of time would be that the killer no longer knows why he killed, nor does the slain man know why he was slain. Here we are reminded of a few lines by Matthew Arnold concerned with the retreat of the sea of faith:

And we are here as on a darkling plane,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Such was the case of the event of the 11th September. Years have passed and though it is still shrouded in ambiguities and surrounded by puzzling questions, its physical or political aftermath is all too evident, influencing almost every domain of life, especially the sphere of international relations, Islam's relationship with other religions and polities of the world. This question assumes a still greater significance when it is taken into account that the perpetrators of this terrorist activity fall back upon certain religious arguments for the mass murder that they had committed. Its effects have spread like a giant stain across the face of the intellectual landscape of the Muslim world. It has changed the frontiers and, in some cases at least, has pulled down the isolating walls, both individual and collective, that separated one perspective from another. The destruction of such walls may be an evil; but the virtues it helped to promote are indispensable and must be supported by other means. It has offered us the possibility to reconsider and re-evaluate settled convictions on many issues and to revisit the 'half-truths' that used to create obstacles to mental co-operation in piety.

The following quotation, though it goes far beyond the context of what we are considering here, is none the less extremely relevant to the question.

> The usual religious arguments, through not probing sufficiently to the depth of things and moreover not having previously had any need to do so, are psychologically somewhat outworn and fail to satisfy certain requirements of causality. If human societies degenerate on the one hand with the passage of time, they accumulate on the other hand experiences in virtue of old age, however intermingled with errors these may be. This paradox is something that any pastoral teaching intended to be effective should take into account, not by drawing new directives from the general error, but on the contrary by using arguments of a higher order, intellectual rather than sentimental.[1]

Mental dilemma is a more or less inevitable consequence of seeking to maintain, in the modern world, all the details of the average religious perspective which characterised one's pious ancestors. One has to rethink many aspects of one's perspective, revisit established positions and question settled convictions because without such a basis belief can only be kept up by not following certain trains of thought which demand to be followed, and by refusing to draw certain obvious conclusions. Have we done that with reference to the event of the 11th September? This is what we would like to explore. If we turn away from such a task we, in fact, would no longer be equipped '*with all thy mind*,[2] let alone loving God. Such belief is exceedingly precarious; and even if the believer in question can live out one's own life in orthodoxy to the end, one has little means of fortifying others, and one is in perpetual danger of finding any day that one's sons and one's daughters have lapsed into agnosticism or atheism. The anti-spiritual pressures of the modern world being what they are— and this applies especially to modern education— the scales are heavily weighted against finding the only true solution, namely a more universal spiritual perspective, which means moving nearer to the Spirit. The refusal of the religious authorities to see these limits results in a perspective which, in the modern world, runs dangerously close to the precipice of disbelief. But in considering the limitations of Muslim exoterism, it must be remembered that from its stronghold of finality as the last religion of this cycle of time, Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, can afford to be generous to other religions. Moreover its position in the cycle confers on it something of the function of a summer-up, which obliges it to mention with justice what has preceded it, or at the least to leave an open door for what it does not specifically mention.

> *Verily we have sent messengers before thee.*[3] *About some of them have we told thee, and about some have we not told thee.*[4]

We may quote also:

> *Verily the Faithful* [5] *and the Jews and the Sabians*[6] *and the Christians who so believeth in God and the Last Day and doeth deeds of piety-no fear shall come upon them neither shall they grieve.*[7]

There is a place for both Judaism and Christianity with in the Islamic civilisation, and Muslims are obliged to protect the synagogues and churches and other Jewish and Christian sanctuaries. It was a calamity for Spanish Jews when the Christians re-conquered Spain.

As we just mentioned, the event of *11th September* has demolished many isolating walls and has initiated a process of reconsidering the settled convictions on various issues in its wake. A plethora of heated debates could be witnessed in the Muslim world. If on the one hand the earlier "rhetoric of rage" of some sectors of the Muslim World has turned into a "raving rhetoric of red rage", and "rampant revenge", on the other hand, sincere and serious efforts have also been made to face the challenge and to analyse the religious arguments, look for their intellectual underpinnings and to examine the conceptual framework and basic assumptions through which these operate. An exhaustive inventory and in depth study of these responses is obviously out of the question. We have therefore tried to focus on three main issues; *Jihād*, the theory of Abode of Peace/ Abode of War (*dār al-ḥarb/dār al-Islām*) and the Misplaced Rulings. According to our investigation all three issues, which subsume a number of secondary issues and ramifications, are in fact a manifestation of a lack of understanding or misinterpretation of a very basic and fundamental principle of Islam which could be termed as the ***Cosmic Divine Law of Prevailing*** (*Qānūn Itmām al-Ḥujjah*). But before we elucidate the fundamentals of this **Divine Law** let us put the matter in perspective by invoking certain facts that are lurking in the background.

Jihād is the only legitimate form of warfare permitted in Islam— anything else must be regarded as mass murder— but, human nature being what it is, no one should be surprised if rulers or governments, going to war for reasons that have nothing holy about them, have sought to justify themselves by claiming that their aggression falls within the limits of *Jihād*. Their punishment, in the light of Islamic doctrine, cannot be other than severe.

This principle is enunciated again and again in the Qur'ān, and the Prophet ﷺ never treated the unbeliever as an enemy unless the unbeliever himself chose the path of enmity. But the Islamists are no different to others, whether religious or irreligious, who feel— and "feel" is the operative word— a burning sense of injustice and, in consequence, believe themselves exempt from all moral rules and considerations of humanity. Justice as such is an unqualified good, but the belief that universal justice is attainable in this world is a symptom of the Utopianism which has caused such havoc in the twentieth century. People forget that Hitler was a typical utopian, however much we may dislike his particular ideal of the perfect society. Lenin was the same. The goals differed, but not the method. Those who believe they can attain the unattainable are obliged to kill and kill again. Islam, certainly, opposes injustice wherever it is found, but this is a practical religion which recognises the limits of human action. When it is possible to establish justice without, in doing so, provoking even greater injustices, then the Muslim is obliged to act. When this is not practicable, he is commanded to show patience and endurance, cleansing his heart of anger. In so doing he may grow in stature, both spiritually and psychologically.

But this is not the course the Islamic activists would normally adopt. The aggression of the religious activists among them is based on certain religious arguments that, in turn, stem from the lack of understanding or misinterpretation of certain very basic and fundamental principles of Islam or a misinterpretation of certain verses of the Qur'ān.

Some of these arguments are:

1. Muslims are a chosen race of God, and therefore only they have the right to rule.
2. The struggle to achieve the supremacy of Islam is a religious requirement for every Muslim. Therefore, if Muslims are living as minorities in a non-Muslim country they must strive to achieve the supremacy by whatever means they can.
3. Since Islam is not in conformity with democracy, so instead of democratically changing a non-Muslim government or a *non-Islamic (or not sufficiently Islamic)* Muslim government, militant means can be resorted to.
4. *Jihād* is the solution to all the woes Muslims are facing today.

In order to offer you a glimpse of the mindset these arguments can produce we quote a concrete example. The incident we quote happened to Dr. Jeffrey Lang. We have lifted it from his remarkable book *Even Angels Ask.*[8]

A Fifth Column

Approximately two months after I had converted to Islam, the Muslim students at the university where I was teaching began to hold lectures on Friday evenings in the mosque. The second lecture was given by Hisham, a very bright medical student who *had been studying in America for almost ten years. I liked and respected Hisham very much. He was rather round and jovial and had a very kind face. He was also a passionate student of Islam.*

Hisham spoke that night about a Muslim's duties and responsibilities. He talked at length about the rituals and a believer's ethical obligations. His speech was very moving and had been running about an hour when he closed it with the following unexpected and stern remark.

"Finally, we must never forget— and this is extremely important— that as Muslims, we are obligated to desire, and when possible to participate in, the overthrow of any non-Islamic government, anywhere in the world, in order to replace it by an Islamic one."

"Hisham!" I interrupted. "Are you implying that Muslim American citizens are to commit themselves to the destruction of the U.S. government? That they are to be a fifth column in America— a secret revolutionary group seeking to overthrow the government? Do you mean that when an American converts to Islam he must commit himself to political treason?!"

I thought that by presenting Hisham with a very extreme scenario, it would force him to soften or qualify his statement. He looked down at the floor as he pondered my question momentarily. Then he looked at me with an expression that reminded me of a doctor about to break the news to his patient that his tumour is malignant.

"Yes," he said, "Yes, that's true."

Many of us can recognise the mind that speaks behind these words. It appears before us in a myriad of faces and a variety of places. Not only this, our Hindu readers would also be able to see the flip side of the coin, the strident Hindu activist with his trident stick, employing a different terminology but essentially the same argument!

The most common of the responses to such arguments from present day Hindus and many of the Muslims is to dissociate oneself from the monstrosities by saying that this is not Islam or this is not true Hinduism. But that amounts to side stepping the question and turning a blind eye to the fact that the groups in question from among both the communities are putting forward religious arguments to validate their actions and the conceptual framework and basic assumptions through which these operate are claimed to be supported by their basic religious texts. In this case one cannot absolve oneself of one's responsibility by simply disowning the group or groups in question. One must place the sin at the doorsteps of a definite group, school of thought or mode of interpretation in one's community and try to hold a mirror to their thinking.

Now to come back to our just mentioned incident, we may ask where had this fervent soul gone wrong? The answer is ***Misplaced Absolutes***. Some thing that was solely a prerogative of the Divine Messenger has been erroneously claimed for a group or an individual of the later ages. Rest of the deduction may be true and the logic working here may be sound but the basic premise on which the argument is constructed remains false.

Divine Law of Prevailing (*Qānūn Itmām al-Ḥujjah*)

Before making an attempt to analyse the arguments advanced by the Islamic activists mentioned above we would like to elucidate the ***Cosmic Divine Law of Prevailing*** (*Qānūn Itmām al-Ḥujjah*) that we mentioned in passing a few paragraphs above. It is extremely important to understand this fundamental Qur'ānic Law in order to come to grips with the present issue.

The basic Islamic texts explicitly make a distinction between the prophets (*nabī*, plural: *anbiyā'*) and the messengers (*rasūl*, plural: *rusul*). The prophets are sometimes maltreated, denied, molested, persecuted and even killed by the communities to whom they were sent. That is not the case with the Divine Messengers. With regard to the Divine Messengers the Qur'ān categorically asserts that "*God has written, 'verily I shall prevail, I and My Messengers.' Surely God is All-Powerful, All-Mighty*".[9] In some cases, the Messengers also pass through hardships and periods of persecution and denials but they ultimately prevail over the community to whom they preached. Their mission passes through the phases of preaching, convincing, acquittal and the final verdict. The modes of prevailing over the community had been different in the cases of different Divine Messengers; acceptance of the community, perishing of the rebellious, defiant elements of the community at the hands of the followers of the Divine Messenger or the annihilation of the community through a calamity that befalls it as a punishment. The phases of the mission of the Divine Messengers have been described in elaborate details in the basic texts.[10] The Law has stood the test of time as the history informs us.

For those who come face to face with the founder of a new religion, the lack of alternative choice becomes as it were absolute in virtue of the correspondingly absolute greatness of the Divine Messenger himself. Divine intervention in history guarantees that the Messenger has received a Divine right to success and, under the impact of the Divine hand, moves from strength to strength toward the final victory prevailing over the powers of darkness and subversion.[11] The Divine Messenger is a "witness" of the Real (*al-Ḥaq*), an instrument of Divine Justice, in this case and his opponents cease to have any alternative choices and eventually forfeit their right of existence. But this is a Right specifically related to the Messengers, a Prerogative that is not given to any one else other than the Divine Messengers. It has no extension in lesser human figures. In consequence there are categories of actions that are also specific to the Divine Messengers and once the channel that was opened between the Divine and the human with the arrival of a Divine Messenger is closed no other human can lay claim to the same authority. With the passage of time and for other people there is inevitably a certain levelling out.

In the case of Islam, what were the categories of actions that were specific to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in his capacity of a Divine Messenger and no other human after him can lay claim to the same authority? For this we have to turn to the specific events which refer to the last phase of the mission of the Prophet Muhammadﷺ. Once the initial two phases of preaching and acquittal had been over and the "tares had been sifted from the good grain" the Revelation pronounced the final verdict of punishment for the idolatrous Arabs, the People of the Book and the Hypocrites; a verdict that was different in the case of each of the three groups who had come face to face with the founder of Islam. It was made clear to the idolatrous Arabs that they had forfeited there right of existence and once the period of the ultimatum expired, if they did not accept Islam they would perish at the hands of the followers of the Prophet Muhammadﷺ.[12] (For details see Note 12). The People of the Book, on the other hand, were given three options; accept the message, accept the supremacy of the Muslim rule by paying *jizyah* and live peacefully or leave the land. The Hypocrites were a different case. (For details see Note 12).

The Companions of the Prophetﷺ were in a sense extension of his mission and, in the words of the Qur'ān, instrumental for the implementation of the Divine verdict given against the three groups who had come face to face with the Prophetﷺ.[13]

The point we are trying to register is that the actions a Divine Messenger takes under his Divine Right, conferred on him by the ***Cosmic Divine Law of Prevailing***, are specific to him and no one else now has the authority to act in a similar manner. Failure to see this distinction results in various misinterpretations that we have termed as "**Misplaced Absolutes**". In the history of Islamic legal thought and jurisprudence the advocates of these "**Misplaced Absolutes**" have been numerous though the saner voices were not lacking either. This brings us back to the analysis of the arguments of the Islamic activists that we mentioned earlier. Let us now have a look at these and the settled convictions that surround these Rulings.

1— We are the Chosen People

There is a settled conviction among the activists that Muslims are a chosen race of God, and therefore only they have the right to rule. The following verse is cited to validate this “self-righteous” claim:

> *You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour, and believing in God.* (3:110)

This verse specifically pertains to the Companions of the Prophetﷺ and speaks of the special status that was conferred on them in their collective capacity. We have touched on the point earlier.[14] The context of verse 3:110 must be understood in the light of 2:143 and 22:78.[15] There in the reason has been made explicit as to why the Companions have been called the “*the best nation*” in 3:110. After the Prophetﷺ himself had borne witness to the religion of truth before them, the truth had manifested itself in their collectivity. Since this testimony by the Prophetﷺ was confined to them and not to the later day Muslims, the title “*the best nation*” is specifically meant for the Companions and does not *grosso modo* apply to other Muslims.

2— Islam has to Reign Supreme

There is a settled conviction among the activists that the struggle to achieve supremacy of Islam is a religious obligation for every Muslim. Therefore, if Muslims are living as a minority in a non-Muslim country, they must strive to achieve dominance by whatever means they can. The following verse is cited to validate their claim:[16]

> *He it is who hath sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of Truth, that He may make it prevail over all religion, though the idolaters be averse.*

But these claims, though considerable, are relative, not absolute because a glance at those passages of the Qur’ān on which their exclusivism is based shows that the verses in question call for a deeper and more universal interpretation than is generally given.[17]

More over some of the contemporary reformers have given this verse a political interpretation. It is held by some Muslim scholars of contemporary times that it is the religious obligation of Muslims to strive for the supremacy of Islam. If a Muslim country is not following Islam, Muslims must organise an effort to topple its government and enforce Islam. An obvious corollary of this viewpoint is that if they are living as minorities in a non-Muslim country, they should strive to achieve the supremacy of Islam there also. They term this struggle an 'Islamic Revolution'.[18]

On the basis of the phrase "*all religions*", it is understood that the followers of Islam must struggle for its dominance in their respective countries and territories. An analysis of the context of this verse shows that it also belongs to the category of commands that is specific to the Prophet Muhammadﷺ and his Companions. It is to be noted that *al-Mushrikīn* (*the idolaters*) is used in this verse. The Qur'ān uses this word specifically for the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet's times. As a result, "*all religions*" in the conjugate clause can only mean "all the religions of Arabia at the time of the Prophetﷺ.[19] Therefore, the verse has no bearing the Muslims that come after the times of the Prophetﷺ. It is sometimes argued in the same vein that Muslims have been promised sovereignty and dominance. The following verse is cited to validate the claim: *God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land, even as He made those before them successors and that he will establish surely their religion for them that He has approved for them.*[20] The same fact is ignored again that in these verses the Qur'ān is specifically addressing the Companions of the Prophetﷺ and speaks of their ultimate victory over the Idolaters of Arabia. Consequently, striving to achieve the political supremacy of Islam is no religious obligation of a present day Muslim. The verses from which this obligation has been construed specifically relate to Prophet Muhammadﷺ and his Companions and can not be extended to the later generations of Islam.

3— Islam and Democracy — Friends or Foes!

There is a settled conviction among the activists that Islam and democracy are adversaries. They contend that in a democracy, the people make laws and in this regard the ambit of law making is infinite. On the other hand, Muslims are bound to follow certain Divine laws and not make laws by themselves. Consequently, there is no compatibility between the two. We shall have the occasion to refer to the question at the end of the next section on *Jihād.* At present it needs to be appreciated that there are two basic aspects of democracy: 1. The process of electing representatives of the people to run the country. 2. The scope and authority of legislation that is to be done by the parliament of a country through its elected representatives. The first aspect is in complete harmony with the political law of Islam as mentioned in the Qur'ān. *The affairs of state of the believers are run by their mutual consultation.* (42:38) Keeping in view the construction of the phrase, it is evident that a consensus or majority opinion of the Muslims can in no way be overruled. The Qur'ān has not said: "The believers are consulted in their affairs"; it has, on the contrary, declared: "*Their affairs of state are run by their mutual consultation*". The style and pattern of the verse demands that an Islamic government should be established through the consultation of the believers, continue to exist on this basis and should cease to exist when it loses it legitimate basis. It should conduct its affairs, in all cases, on the basis of a consensus or majority opinion of the believers. As far as the second aspect is concerned, Islam imposes a broad restriction on it. The scope of legislation must never exceed the directives of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah.*[21] Therefore, in an Islamic State no law can be enacted contrary to the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* or one which does not take into consideration the guidance provided by them. The believers indeed have a right to disagree with those in authority, but they can have no disagreement with Allah and His Prophetﷺ. In fact, if such a situation arises even with those in authority, the decision must be made in the light of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah.*[22]

It can be said that with the above quoted qualification, the political system of Islam resembles democracy in its essence. Muslims must therefore adopt democratic means to bring a change in the society they are living in. They must also remember that as citizens of non-Muslim countries they are bound in contract with that country. They must follow the laws of the country, whose citizens they have become by their own free choice, in letter and in spirit. Abiding by laws is their religious duty. Moreover, if they feel that it is not possible for them to practice their religion because of some hindrance created by a law or ruling of that country, even then they should not disobey the law and cause any disruption. The correct attitude in such a case would be to migrate from that country.

4— *Jihād*[23]

There is a settled conviction among the activists that *Jihād* is the answer to all their woes. Taking up arms and destroying the enemy is the solution to the injustices they are suffering. In this regard, guerrilla warfare, hidden attacks, clandestine offensives on an enemy are considered part of *Jihād* by these activists. This is an issue that has to be addressed in detail and the readers may find certain overlapping narratives and even repetitions in this section. Here, in this section, three of its important aspects shall be elaborated upon before we offer general comments on the settled convictions: A. The Authority to wage *Jihād* B. The Legitimate Reasons for *Jihād* C. Abode of Peace/Abode of War.

The Backdrop[24]

The Christians and Muslims accuse each other on the issue. There seems to be no end to the argument. Christians still se Islam as a religion of war, dedicated to conquest. They hav inherited the fear which obsessed their ancestors when Muslim civilisation was dominant and Christendom trembled before the “heathen” threat. Those who have turned their backs on Christianity, as is the case in the vast sectors of the West, still share these fears and these prejudices, and they associate Islam with two horrors: savage punishments and “Holy War”.

Muslims, from their side of the fence, see Christianity and its heirs as inherently aggressive (having been at the receiving end of this aggression). They react either with impotent fury or with a degree of subservience, but always with a deep sense of injustice.

Religion is one thing, decadent human nature quite another, and the truths inherent in a particular Faith are not effaced by the misbehaviour of its adherents. The truth stands; eventually everything else falls away as if it had never been. There are those who believe that a policy of non-violence can be effective against aggression, as well as being the path of virtue.[25] Discord is ineradicably in the world simply because this world is so far from Paradise.[26] Hence *Jihād*, the holy effort to minimise discord, to maintain the balance between contrary forces and to defend what is worth defending against corruption.

The Prophet remained in his native city of Mecca for thirteen years after he received the first revelation and, during that period, he and the converts to the new Faith suffered bitter persecution at the hands of the pagans. They bore this in patience, as they were commanded to do. In Christian terms, they “turned the other cheek”. Only when persecution changed into a grim determination to destroy the community and its leader was permission given, first for them to emigrate to a place of safety and then to take up arms. This came in two verses of the twenty-second chapter of the Qur’ān:

> *Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is waged because they are oppressed, and God is well able to help them; those who have been expelled from their homes without just cause, only because they say ‘God is our Lord’. And had it not been for God repelling some people by means of others, cloisters*

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> *and churches and synagogues and mosques in which God's Name is much remembered would have been destroyed......*

There we have it, and the priorities are clear. "Holy War" is in defence of holiness and all that is holy. The mention of churches and synagogues is significant. There is a duty to defend faith as such, religion as such, against those who would stifle the remembrance of God. These verses establish the principles of armed *Jihād*. Fighting is permitted in self-defence, in defence of religious faith, on behalf of the persecuted and, in particular, those driven out of their homes to become refugees. There is however a third case, in practice open to various interpretations (and misinterpretations): this is war to prevent the spread of corruption, that is to say, of some great wickedness which threatens to engulf a wide area and to pervert a great number of human souls. There are, of course, some among today's Muslims who see western civilisation, with its displacement of God from the centre of human existence and its permissiveness, as well as its extensions in the corrupt Muslim governments, as just such a case.

A. The Authority to Wage *Jihād*

Both the Qur'ān and the established practice of the Prophetsﷺ are explicit on the point that *Jihād* can only be waged by a state. No group of people have been given the authority to take up arms, because individual groups if given this license will create great disorder and anarchy by fighting among themselves once they overcome the enemy. A study of the Qur'ān reveals that the *Makkan Surahs* do not contain any directive of *Jihād* for the simple reason that in Makkah the Muslims did not have their own state. One must remember that Islam does not advocate "the law of the jungle". It is a religion in which both human life and the way it can be taken away carry great sanctity. Islam does not give us any right to take a human life unless certain conditions are fulfilled. So, it was not until an Islamic state was established in Madinah that the Qur'ān gave permission to the Muslims to take up arms against the onslaught mounted by the Quraysh:

> *To those against whom war is made, permission is given [to fight] because they have been oppressed and verily Allah is Most Powerful to help them. [They] are those who have been expelled from their homes without any basis, only because they said: Our Lord is Allah.* (22:39-40)

Consequently, the Prophetﷺ never retaliated in Makkah to the maltreatment and persecution which he and some of his Companions had to face.[27] In spite of this reign of terror let lose by the Quraysh, the Prophet Ɛ and his Companions never retaliated even though they could have easily done so. On the contrary, on the terrible agony suffered by 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir, the Prophetﷺ is reported to have said: "I give you glad tidings of paradise, O family of Yasir". The Prophetﷺ preferred to suffer and endure the persecution than to counter attack his enemies, since Muslims at that stage had not fulfilled this all important pre-requisite of *Jihād*: establishment of a state. Similarly, earlier Prophets were not allowed by the Almighty to wage war unless they had established their political authority in an independent piece of land.[28] Consequently, there is a consensus among all the authorities on Islamic Law that only an Islamic State has the authority to wage *Jihād*. No group, party or organisation has the authority to take up arms. People who undertake such activities disobey the religion they follow. Without the authority of the state *Jihād* is no more than a terrorist activity. Referring to this pre-requisite of state authority, the Prophetﷺ is reported to have said:

> A Muslim ruler is the shield [of his people]. A war can only be waged under him and people should seek his shelter [in war].[29]

This condition is so explicit and categorical that all the authorities of Islamic Law unanimously uphold it. Details are given in the endnotes.[30] Sayyid Sabiq, while referring to this consensus, writes:[31]

Among *Kifāyah* obligations, there is a category for which the existence of a ruler is necessary e. g. *Jihād* and administration of punishments.

Some activists have tried to justify that in some cases Islam allows *Jihād* without state authority by citing the skirmishes carried out by Abu Basir against the Quraysh. We are afraid that this is a misinterpretation of facts: we know from historical records[32] that after the treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, Abū Baṣīr defected to Madinah. However, according to the terms of the treaty, he was duly returned back to the Quraysh by the Prophetﷺ. He was sent back in the custody of two men from the Quraysh. On his way back, he killed one of his two custodians and again defected to Madinah. When he arrived in Madinah, the Prophetﷺ was angry at what he had done. Sensing that the Prophetﷺ would once again return him to the Quraysh, he left Madinah and settled at a place near Dhu 'l-Marwah, where later on other people joined him. From this place, they would attack the caravans of the Quraysh. If these guerrilla attacks are analysed in the light of the Qur'ān, the basic thing which comes to light is that whatever Abu Basir and has Companions did was not sanctioned at all by Islam. The Qur'ān says that the actions and deeds of a person who had not migrated to Madinah were not the responsibility of the Islamic state:

And as to those who believed but did not migrate [to Madinah], you owe no duty of protection until they migrate. (8:72) Not only did the Qur'ān acquit the newly founded Islamic state of Madinah from the actions of these people, we even find the following harsh remarks of the Prophetﷺ about Abu Basir when he returned to Madinah after killing one of his two custodians: "His mother be cursed, if he is able to find some supporters he is bound to ignite the flames of war."

So, one can safely conclude that *Jihād* without state authority is terrorism and is totally prohibited in Islam. Moreover, clandestine attacks on a country even with state authority are not allowed. *Jihād* must be openly declared against the enemy country. If a peace treaty has been made with it, then it should first be openly declared null and void. Similarly, non-combatants of the enemy country should never be targeted. No one has the right to take the life of innocent civilians.

B. *Jihād* — The Legitimate Reasons

We have mentioned that fighting is permitted in self-defence, in defence of religious faith and on behalf of the persecuted. The Qurʾān says:[33]

> *And why is it that you not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated and oppressed -- men, women, and children, whose cry is: 'Our Lord! rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from Yourself one who will protect and raise for us from Yourself one who will help*!

But this should be resorted to when all diplomatic means fail. Moreover, Muslims should be in a position to successfully combat the enemy, otherwise the whole venture would be no more than a suicide. Moreover, the decision that whether or not a country is in a position to wage war has to be taken by the elected representatives of the state and, of course, as in all human affairs, the possibility of error always remains. The guideline to give due consideration to one's military strength is found in the life of the Prophetﷺ. According to the Qurʾān, it was necessary in those times that the believers should be in a certain number before they launch an attack. Initially, the stipulated ratio was 1:10.[34] However, in the later years, when large-scale conversions to Islam had taken place, this was reduced to 1:2. It seems that in both these situations, God would be providing the remaining support Himself for this noble cause. The above ratios were meant for the time of the Prophetﷺ and his Companions. What are we to think of the present times when the faith of the Muslim community is on the wane and even a remote comparison with the times of the Prophetﷺ would be out of question? Therefore, an Islamic State should realise that in case of going to war in the cause of

Jihād against an enemy, it has to muster no less than half of the enemy's military might if it wants to expect Divine help. Consequently, Muslim countries of today should keep consolidating and developing their military might as a deterrent to their enemies.[35]

We had the occasion to explain in the previous sections that *Jihād* should never be carried out for territorial expansion or for forcibly converting people to Islam. People who erroneously justify either or both of these two bases draw their arguments from the *Jihād* carried out by the Prophetﷺ and his Companions. It has already been shown that the *Jihād* carried out by the Prophetﷺ and his Companions after him was governed by a specific law meant only for the Divine Messengers and their immediate addressees, and has nothing to do with later day Muslims. A study of the Qur'ān reveals that the purpose of their *Jihād* was neither territorial expansion nor with a view to the forced conversion of people to Islam: contrary to both, it was a Divine punishment meted out to people who had come face to face with a Divine Messenger and after having arrogantly denied him had received the punishment under the Divine command. In the light of these details, it is evident that Muslims today have no right to carry out *Jihād* to subjugate other countries to establish the supremacy of Islam or to forcibly convert people to Islam.

C. Abode of Peace/Abode of War[36]

Some activist groups have tried to find support for their views in the *Dar al-Islam/Dar al-Harb* theory of some of the *fuqaha*. It is this theory which, in the general Western view, has certainly not been altered by certain recent events, has planted Islam as one of the most warlike of all religions. Stereotyped opinions and the fact that few people have the patience to delve into the principles and "myths" underlying the surface appearance make the task of bringing out Islam's actual views on peace and war especially difficult.

Today, some western historians are questioning the notion that Islam encourages violence, because the history of Muslims has not been any more violent than that of most other cultures." While most Christians probably would not describe Christianity as a violent faith, it would indeed be very difficult to argue that the history of the Christian West has been more peaceful than that of the Muslim world. The number of atrocities committed by Christian governments and armies in the name of God are legion. The same could be said for the number of forced conversions to Christianity. There were times in history when Muslims were also guilty of religious persecution, but western historians have shown that, on the whole, the record of Muslims compares very favourably with that of Christians in this regard. In particular, state-sponsored persecution or forced conversion of non-Muslims was quite rare in the Islamic world.

Many western writers, past and present, have pointed to the division in classical Islamic Law of the world into *dār al ḥarb* (the abode of war) and *dār al Islām* (the abode of Islam or peace) as evidence of the essentially aggressive nature of Islam. This legal-political formulation separates the world into two mutually exclusive territories: *dār al Islām*, the lands ruled by Muslims according to the *Sharīʿah* (Islamic law), and *dār al ḥarb*, the lands not under Muslim control which must be subjected, by conquest if necessary, to Islamic rule. According to this theory, a perpetual state of war exists between Muslim and non-Muslim territories. Many in academia and the western media claim that this demonstrates the warlike character of Islam.

We do not intend to defend the *dār al Islām/dār al ḥarb* theory, nor, for that matter, to dispute it. Our purpose is not to decide if this formulation by classical jurists was right— although we think that would be a useful exercise— but rather to argue against transcendentalizing it, making it into a "**Misplaced Absolute**", something that is done by both Muslims and many critics of Islam. By this we mean that many non-Muslim scholars who decry Islam as inherently violent, and also many modern Muslim leaders and scholars claim that this classical political-military theory is fundamental to the religion and that, from the standpoint of Islam, it must be valid for all times and places. Both groups, but with very different motives, claim that to doubt that this classical formula is appropriate for our time is equivalent to a denial of the validity of Islam. The two main questions that we believe both sides should reconsider are: Is this political-legal construct really essential to Islam? and is it right for this day and age? Since for some Muslims, an affirmative answer to the first question implies the same for the second.

It seems to us extremely difficult to justify, based on the Qur'ān, a war that is waged for any reason other than self-defence or on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted.

The passages 2:191-2, 2:191-3, 2:256, 4:91 and 8: 61 of the Qur'ān clearly allow fighting only in self-defence or in defence of victims of tyranny or oppression. It is significant that three of them occur in the second *surah*, which is believed by many Muslim scholars to be a recapitulation of the major themes of the Qur'ān. Verses 22:39-40 may best illustrate the attitude that the Qur'ān adopts towards war: cautionary, circumspect, and realistic. But one finds little support in the Qur'ān for the use of aggression as a means to force non-Muslim states to accept Islamic rule.

The so-called *Verse of the Sword* (9:5) is often used to argue that Islam encourages military expansion. All exegetes agree on the occasion of its revelation: Seven years after the Muslim exodus to Madinah, the Prophet negotiated a truce with the pagan Quraysh, known as the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. A year later, the Quraysh violated the terms of the treaty and the following verse, which ordered the Muslims to attack the pagans, was revealed:

> *And so when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to other than God wherever you may come upon them,*

> *and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place. Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: behold, God is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace.* (9:5)

It would seem then that there is absolutely no conflict between 9:5 and the other verses just cited (2:191-93; 2:256; 4:91; 8:61), which prohibit military aggression; verse 9:5 deals with the issue of an opponent's violations of the treaty and is not a permission to engage in military expansion.

Recourse to Abrogation

Yet many Muslim commentators feel that this verse does indeed permit military aggression against a government that refuses to surrender to Islamic rule. In order to reconcile the apparent conflict between this interpretation of the *Verse of the Sword* and the other verses that forbid aggression, a large-scale abrogation of verses is proposed. As one advocate for this position puts it,[37] "114 verses spread among 54 surahs advocating peace were revoked by 9:5."

The theory— and it is a theory— that underlies the discussion of these groups is that certain verses of the Qur'ān revoke for all time and place certain other verses. But the theory of abrogation, although accepted by many Muslim scholars, has several weak points and has been successfully challenged by other scholars.

To begin with, there is no explicit authenticated saying of Muhammadﷺ that either states that this theory or asserts that one verse has annulled another verse permanently. All of the *Ḥadīth* reports concerning abrogation are considered weak by Muslim experts." If a Companion of the Prophet felt that one verse cancelled another permanently, that was his or her personal interpretation. For Muslims, only a statement of Muhammadﷺ that a verse had been abrogated should be authoritative. There are no reliable reports of this nature.

Verses 2:106 and 16:101 are often cited in support of the theory of abrogation, although the context indicates that the annulled revelations referred to are those received by prophets that came before Prophet Muhammadﷺ. At the very least, this would be a very natural and plausible interpretation.

Another weakness in the theory is that among those Muslim scholars, who accept it, there is wide disagreement on exactly which verses are abrogated and to what extent. In almost all cases where one writer has upheld abrogation, there are other writers who argue against the alleged abrogation.

Finally, the theory of abrogation appears to claim that God placed superfluous information in the last revelation to mankind and that He had to correct Himself frequently during the process of revelation. This perception is very hard to square with the Qur'ānic depiction of God. Not surprisingly, quite a number of converts to Islam inform that they were shocked and had their faith severely shaken when they first discovered this theory.

Therefore, we feel that there is no real need or justification for the classical theory of abrogation. Yet without this theory, the Qur'ān cannot be used to support waging war other than in self-defence or against oppression. This is proved by the fact that such a massive application of the theory of abrogation is needed to justify the type of military expansion advocated by the dār al Islām/dār al ḥarb formula. Clearly, Qur'ānic passages dealing with warfare weigh heavily against such unprovoked aggression.

> Virtually all other attempts to prove that Muslims must subject non-Muslims to Islamic rule come under the same argument. That is, the conclusion that Islam encourages the subjugation of non-Muslims is a consequence of— or is at least strongly influenced by— the DIH concept. The examples of Muhammadﷺ and Umar ibn al Khattab are often cited to support this formulation. Similarly, some writers believe that the accounts of Muhammadﷺ sending letters to the rulers around him, inviting them to accept Islam, show that something close to the DIH concept was implicit in his mind. But here again, as we alluded to earlier, a careful and thorough examination of their political decisions and actions does not lead inevitably to it.

The real reason behind their actions has been elucidated in the section on ***The Divine Law of Prevailing.***

Although we do not see 'Umar's example as speaking strongly against the DIH concept, at the same time we do not see his actions during this period speaking in favour of the concept either. It is one thing to defeat a tyrannous aggressor; it is quite another to declare war on a peaceful neighbour for not submitting to Muslim rule.

We have considered three of the main arguments used by Muslims to justify the *dār al Islām/dār al ḥarb* formulation. The argument based on the Qur'ān seems to be extremely problematic, for it requires the acceptance of the very questionable and unnecessary theory of abrogation together with a radical application of this theory. A more natural reading of the Qur'ān would lead to the conclusion that the scripture is opposed to military aggression. Prophet Muhammad's example also does not support the formulation, for he never led an attack against a peaceful neighbour who refused to accept Muslim rule. We may also note that Muslim historians record that there were pagan tribes who never fought the Prophet, but rather were allies of the Muslims. Moreover, the Muslims fought on their behalf. Finally, the conquests during the caliphate of 'Umar— and for that matter Abu Bakr— do not fit the scenario assumed by the DIH theory and cannot be used to justify it.

The DIH concept is not essential to Islam. The textual sources of Islam do not lead Muslims inevitably to this foreign policy. It could be argued that there may have been extenuating circumstances long ago that justified this division. Did Muslim scholars in the classical period correctly see their non-Muslim neighbours as enemies waiting for the first signs of weakness in order to attack? Was the Muslim nation in those days in a conquer-or-be-conquered political environment? Was the theory only developed in order to justify future Muslim conquests? Was it constructed in an effort to explain and make sense of past conquests? we believe these are important questions, but they require more extensive investigation than we have time and space for here. Our purpose in this section has been only to argue against the position that this formulation is fundamental to Islam.

This brings us to the second question: Is the *dār al Islām/dār al ḥarb* concept appropriate for today's Muslims? To the average non-Muslim reader, the answer may seem obvious. To them, the idea that Muslims would be religiously obligated to attack such non-aggressive countries as Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ecuador or Brazil if they were to refuse to submit to Islamic rule is unacceptable. Muslims who do not believe that this classical political division is fundamental to Islam would probably agree. Even more conservative Muslims who uphold the DIH formula would most likely hesitate— at least for a moment— to apply it to these hypothetical cases.

Many things have changed since the classical period of Islamic law and most Muslims— liberal, moderate and conservative— acknowledge the need to adapt the Sharīʿah to modern times. In particular, there are many elements of the Sharīʿah code of warfare that seem impractical today. For example, the strict limitations it imposes on the destruction of enemy property and the injury of civilians are difficult to uphold in a war fought with today's weapons of mass destruction, as Iranian religious leaders discovered in the recent Iran-Iraq war. In order to succeed against an enemy in modern warfare, it may be necessary to go beyond the restrictions set by classical Islamic law.

Yet if Muslims allow themselves to amend certain aspects of the Sharīʿah theory of politics and warfare, then it seems to us that they should reconsider the DIH concept. Since we do not believe it to be essential to Islam, we feel that we Muslims need not insist that it is valid for our time.

When leaders of Muslim movements around the world invoke the DIH concept today, it is almost always in response to what are perceived as very immediate and real threats to

Muslims. That is, the governments that Muslim activists actually apply the *dār al ḥarb* concept to in their political propaganda are ones that they view as real enemies, not only because these governments will not submit to some form of Islamic rule, but also because they are seen to inflict injustice and suffering on Muslim people. Thus, regardless of the theoretical or ethical dilemmas posed by the theory today, the conclusions of the religious leaders who invoke it are, for almost all Muslims, patently correct: ***These enemies of Muslims should be brought down.***

First on the Muslim activists' lists of malevolent "anti-Islamic" governments; are the brutal and totalitarian political systems under which most of the world's Muslims currently live. Next are those governments of non-Muslim countries that attacked or are attacking or actively oppressing Muslims, such as Serbia with respect to Bosnia, the Russian Republic with respect to Chechnia, Israel with respect to the Palestinians, the US with respect to Iraq and India with respect to Kashmir. Finally, there are those governments that are believed to be supporting the above political systems in their persecution and suppression of Muslims. Chief among the countries, in the opinion of many Muslims, are the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany and once again, the Russian Republic.

Militant Muslim leaders who plead for the overthrow of these political systems very frequently tie their appeals to the DIH concept. However, they would have a stronger case if they focused their arguments solely on the injustice and suffering being inflicted upon the Muslim masses, for, without a doubt, all Islamic textual sources, especially the Qur'ān, exhort Muslims to unite in the fight against aggression and tyranny whenever possible.

That the secular governments of the West are united in an effort to destroy Islam or Muslims is probably an exaggeration, but it is true that these governments fear and are opposed to the many Islamic movements that they feel threaten their economic and military interests in the Middle East. It is also a fact that, all too frequently, their political policies have brought great suffering to Muslims. On these grounds alone, are not Muslim citizens of these countries obliged to consider themselves enemies of their governments?

A small minority of Muslims living in the West definitely would say so, while the great majority would prefer not to think about it. But a third alternative is available: Muslim citizens of secular democracies have the ability, and perhaps the obligation, to communicate their community's positions on religious and political issues. Muslims living in the West are often the first to admit that they enjoy greater religious and political freedom than do citizens of Muslim countries. This provides them, as compared to other Muslims around the world, with a unique and important opportunity to influence the societies in which they live. If they unite socially and organise politically— two things that right now they seem reluctant to do— they can greatly affect their society's viewpoints and the future of Muslims everywhere. And this is by far the most practical and effective way they can help their fellow Muslims in distress. To squander this opportunity would be a terrible loss.

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We would now like to return to the question of the **Misplaced Absolutes** and the **Misplaced Rulings**[38] that result from the application of these **Misplaced Absolutes.** In what follows we have given a list of eleven **Misplaced Rulings.**

1. THE PUNISHMENT OF APOSTASY
2. WAGING WAR AGAINST NON-MUSLIMS
3. *DHIMMI* STATUS OF NON-MUSLIM MINORITIES
4. PROHIBITION OF FRIENDSHIP WITH NON-MUSLIMS
5. THE SUPERIORITY OF MUSLIM BLOOD
6. GREETING NON-MUSLIMS IN AN INFERIOR WAY
7. SALVATION OF THE NON-MUSLIMS
8. ASSASSINATION OF NON-MUSLIMS
9. CURSING NON-MUSLIMS

10. Prohibition of Asking Forgiveness for Non-Muslims
11. Reward of Killing Non-Muslims

The Punishment of Apostasy

According to almost all Muslim jurists,[39] a Muslim who leaves the folds of Islam is punishable by death. They base their verdict on the following *Ḥadīth* as narrated by Ibn 'Abbās in the following way: "Execute the people who change their faith."[40] In their opinion, the ruling pronounced in this *Ḥadīth* is regarded to have a general application for all times upon every Muslim who renounces his faith from the times of the Prophetﷺ to the Day of Judgement. It has been shown in the previous sections that once the Idolaters of Arabia had deliberately denied the message of Muhammadﷺ they were sentenced to death because of this denial.[41] The above quoted *Ḥadīth* is merely a statement of this law for the Arab Idolaters of the Prophet's times. It has no application to any other people or nation. It does not even relate to the People of the Book of the Prophet's times. For reasons already explained, the law for these Idolaters was to either accept faith or face extinction. Hence, it follows that if a person among the Idolaters after accepting faith reverted to his original state of disbelief, he had to face the same penalty. The following Ḥadīth is of similar meaning also: "I have been directed to fight against these people (*al-nās*) until they testify to the oneness of God and to the Prophethood of Muhammad, establish the prayer and pay *zakāh*. If they accept these terms, their lives will be spared except if they commit some other violation that entails their execution by Islamic law and [in the Hereafter] their account rests with God."[42] The following text of this Ḥadīth clearly shows that the word *al-nās*, "the people" refer to the *Mushrikīn* (The Idolaters of Arabia): "Anas Ibn Mālik reports from the Prophet: 'I have been directed to fight against these Idolaters until they testify to the oneness of God and to the fact that Muhammad is his servant and messenger. If they testify to the oneness of God and to the fact that Muhammad is his servant and prophet, establish our prayer and face our *Qiblah* [while praying], and eat our slaughtered animals, their life and wealth we shall hold sacred except if they commit some violation."[43] The expeditions sent by the first Caliph Abū Bakr against those who had refused to pay *Zakāh* in his times should also be understood in this perspective. Since, according to Islam, a person who refuses to pay *Zakah* does not legally remain a Muslim, those who had tried to evade *Zakah* from among the Idolaters had actually reverted to their state of disbelief; hence the verdict— accept faith or face death. So, the Caliph Abu Bakr was merely administering the punishment of death upon them announced for them under the Law mentioned earlier. Consequently, apart from the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet's times, it has no bearing upon any other person or nation.[44]

Waging War against Non-Muslims

Authorities are of the opinion that Muslims must fight the polytheist nations as well as the Jews and Christians of today until they subdue them. It is further held that while the polytheist nations must be put to death if they do not accept faith, the Jews and Christians can be allowed to live on their religions if they submit to Muslim authority by paying *Jizyah.*[45] Much has been said about this issue in the preceding pages but a few more arguments need to be examined. The following verses are generally presented in support of this view:

> *Slay the Idolaters wherever you find them. Seize them, surround them and everywhere lie in ambush for them. But if they repent from their wrong beliefs and establish regular prayers and pay Zakāh, then spare their lives. God is Oft-Forgiving and Ever Merciful.*"[46] "*Fight those who believe not in Allah or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizyah after being subdued and live a life of submission.*"[47]

It has been shown in the previous sections that these verses and other verses of similar meaning specifically pertain to the polytheists, the Jews and the Christians of the Prophet Muhammad's times. They had deliberately denied the message of Muhammadﷺ and were as a result given this punishment. Today, after the termination of the institution of *Waḥy* (revelation), no action can be taken against them. Muslims must continue to develop friendly relations with them and cordially invite them to Islam without threatening their existence or authority. After Muhammadﷺ his authorised Companions carried on the mission against the major political powers of their times. This offensive, it has been discussed earlier, was specific to their status as witnesses to the truth, and their endeavour was basically a manifestation of a divine scheme. Consequently, the age-old debate about whether Islam was spread through the sword or not should also be understood in this perspective. The Companions of Muhammadﷺ in their collective capacity were only enforcing the implication of their status as witnesses to the religion of the truth. In reality, they were not spreading Islam; they were punishing people who had deliberately denied the truth. Consequently, after them, as has been stated earlier, Muslims have no right to subdue nations and countries in the name of Islam or impose *Jizyah* upon them.

Dhimmī Status of Non-Muslim Minorities

It is held by Muslim authorities that the non Muslim citizens of an Islamic state are of two categories[48] with regard to their citizenship of a state: (i) *Dhimmīs*, viz. those who have come under an Islamic State on account of being subdued in a battle. (ii) *Musta'mins*, viz. non-Muslim residents of *Daru 'l-Harb* who temporarily reside in *Daru 'l-Islam*. Since subduing non-Muslims by force is no longer permitted today, *Dhimmīs* and *Musta'mins* are categories of non-Muslims specific to the age of the Prophetﷺ and his Companions. The directives of *Fiqh* related to *Dhimmīs* and *Musta'mins* consequently cannot be related to the non-Muslims of today. The Non-Muslim minorities of today living in Muslim countries can only be classified as *Mu'āhids* (citizenship by contract).[49] Keeping in

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view the general welfare of the state, through mutual consent, any contract can be made with non-Muslims of today regarding their rights. As such, all dealings with them should be according to the terms of the treaty concluded with them.

Prohibition of Friendship with Non-Muslims

On the basis of the following verses of the Qur'ān, some Muslim scholars[50] are of the view that Muslims should never make friends with non-Muslims; in fact, they should show hostility and antagonism towards them:

> *Believers should not make friends with the Kuffār against the interest of the believers.*"[51] "*O believers do not make friends with the Kuffār against the interest of the believers. Do you wish to offer God an open argument against yourselves?*"[52] "*Believers take not these Jews and the Christians for your friends. They are but friends to each other. And he amongst you who turns to them [for friendship] is of them.*"[53]

If the third verse is understood in the light of the first two, it is evident from the first two verses that the actual word used for the Jews and Christians is "*Kuffār*" that is the ungrateful truth-concealers who came face to face with the Messenger. Consequently, owing to reasons discussed earlier, these verses cannot be related in any sense to the non-Muslims of today.

The Superiority of Muslim Blood

The following *Ḥadīth* is presented as an evidence to support the view that a Muslim will not be killed if he is guilty of killing a non-Muslim[54] whereas the reverse will be carried out: "No Muslim will be killed in *Qiṣāṣ* of a *Kāfir*."[55] It is evident from another text of this that here the word *Kāfir* signifies an Idolater: "No Muslim will be killed in *Qiṣāṣ* of an Idolater."[56] Here again it is to be noted that after Muhammad's migration to Madinah, the Idolaters had lost their right to existence after having deliberately denied him. As a result, this *Ḥadīth* and other *Aḥādīth* of a similar purport are solely related to the Idolaters of the Prophet's times.[57] This ruling has no bearing on the non-Muslims of today. Consequently, today if a Muslim is found guilty of murdering a non-Muslim, he shall certainly be sent to the gallows if he is not forgiven by the family of the person who was slain.

Greeting non-Muslims in an Derogatory Way

Some Muslim scholars are of the view that non-Muslims should not be greeted in the usual Islamic way by saying *assalāmu ‘alaykum* (peace be to you).[58] It is argued that non-Muslims do not deserve this prayer. The following *Ḥadīth* is presented in support of this view: “The Prophetﷺ said: ‘When the People of the Book greet you, reply them by saying *wa “alaykum*’”.[59] If all the texts of this *Ḥadīth* are collected and analysed, what comes to light is the fact that some among the People of the Book of the Prophet’s times, bent upon mischief, would twist their tongues and instead of saying the proper words of the salutation, would say *assāmu ‘alaykum* (death be to you), which when quickly pronounced sounded very near to the original words of *assalāmu ‘alaykum*. It was to counter this vicious play of words that the Muslims were directed to say: ‘*wa ‘alaykum*’ (same to you). It must be borne in mind that the Muslims were asked to give this particular reply only after the basic truths had been revealed in their ultimate form by Muhammadﷺ to the People of the Book after many years of propagation, and in spite of that they were not willing to submit to them. Had this ultimate stage not come, one can safely conclude that Muslims would never have been asked to reply with equally harsh words and would have continued to say the words: *assalāmu ‘alaykum*, the best of prayers and the best of wishes. Today no Muslim preacher can ever be in a position to say that non-Muslims have deliberately denied the message of Muhammadﷺ. Therefore, he must continue his efforts of presenting his message all his life, continue to wish well to all the non-Muslims of the world, and continue to greet them with *assalāmu ‘alaykum*.[60] Even in the time of the Prophetﷺ before the non-Muslims of his times had become *Kuffār* by deliberately rejecting his message, they too were greeted as Muslims were. In this period, the Prophetﷺ himself said *assalāmu 'alaykum* to the non-Muslims of his times. Uthāmah Ibn Zayd reports: "The Prophetﷺ once passed by a mixed gathering of Muslims and Jews and said *assalāmu 'alaykum* to them."[61]

Salvation of the Non-Muslims

It is a settled conviction among a large number of Muslims that all non-Muslims will necessarily go to Hell. Verses like the following usually form the basis of their view: "*The disbelievers among the People of the Book [Jews and Christians] and the Idolaters shall burn for ever in the fire of Hell. They are the vilest of all creatures.*"[62] Once again, it must be appreciated that these verses speak of the Jews and Christians and the Idolaters of the Prophet Muhammad's times, who had come face to face with a Divine Messenger and had deliberately denied him. It does not refer to the non-Muslims of later times. The question is more over, dovetailed with the issue of the validity of other religions which, to say the least, is not a simple issue that could be resolved here. Further to this, the Muslim Authorities have taken various positions on the issue that makes a whole spectrum of opinions. It would require a major study to elucidate different aspects of the question. For the present one can say that, seen in the light of the foregoing discussion and against the background of the **Law** mentioned earlier, the whole issue takes on a different colour.

Assassination of Non-Muslims

One of the arguments on the basis of which it is held that blasphemy is punishable by a death penalty is the execution of certain non-Muslims of the Prophet's times who had allegedly blasphemed against Allah and the Prophetﷺ.[63] If all these cases are analysed, it comes to light that this conclusion is incorrect. Once again we are faced with a situation in which the people put to death were those who had forfeited their right of existence and had to be punished after the Prophet's migration to Madinah under the **Law** mentioned earlier. While most of them were given more time and respite to contemplate on the consequences of their denial, those among them who assumed the role of active adversaries and were spreading disorder and anarchy in the society were punished by death after they were repeatedly warned on their defiant and rebellious behaviour. These steps specifically relate to the adversaries of Muhammadﷺ and cannot be extended for general application.

Cursing Non-Muslims

The common Muslim thinks that he must curse non-Muslims and think ill of them. In this regard, a supplication called the *Qunūt-i-Nāzilah* in which God is invoked to destroy and annihilate non-Muslims is cited as evidence that, on certain occasions, was made by the Prophetﷺ. Again it needs to be pointed out that making a special prayer of this nature against the non-Muslims is a prerogative of the Divine Messenger and was only related to the *Kuffār* who faced him. Later day Muslims do not have this right.

Prohibition of Asking Forgiveness for Non Muslims

A common perception among Muslims is that the following verse of the Qur'ān forbids them from asking forgiveness for non-Muslims. "*It is not proper for the Prophet and those who believe to ask Allah's Forgiveness for the Mushrikūn, even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are the dwellers of the Fire.*"[64] Here, as in the earlier cases, it needs to be appreciated that once the fate of the Idolaters, as the verse itself clarifies, has been announced by the Revelation, and they were condemned to Hell because of their rebellious and defiant response to the Message, Muslims were obliged to take certain specific measures against them under the Law. This verse does not relate to the non-Muslims of the times after the Prophetﷺ and his Companions.

Reward of Killing Non-Muslims

On the basis of the following *Ḥadīth*, it is claimed that killing a Non-Muslim frees the Muslim who kills him from the chastisement of Hell: "A disbeliever and his killer will never be together in Hell."[65] In other words, this *Ḥadīth* gives us to understand that a Muslim will be rewarded if he kills a non-Muslim. Consequently, Imam Abū Dā'ūd, the celebrated Muslim scholar and compiler of *Ḥadīth* has placed this *Ḥadīth* in a chapter entitled, "*bāb fi faḍli man qatala Kāfiran*" (Chapter on the Reward of a Muslim who Kills a *Kāfir*).[66] By now it would have been clear to the readers that these words relate to the Idolaters of the Prophet's times who had lost their right to live after they had deliberately rejected the truth. These words do not authorise later day Muslims for manslaughter.

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The Muslim is commanded to speak gently to those who do not share his beliefs, both out of respect for their common humanity but because, in the words of the Prophet, "God gives (a reward) for gentleness that He does not give for harshness." Moreover he knows, or should know, that personal example achieves more than words can ever do and that hostility to those who are unresponsive to the message only provokes a reciprocal hostility.

As Iqbal, the sage and poet of the East, has said:[67]

To allow a bad word to rise to the lips is a fault;
For all alike are the creatures of God, both the Kāfir and the True Believer.
The essence of humanity is respect for man;
And thou shalt do well to make careful note of this important point.
To be a man is to behave well as individuals towards each other,
And one should forge ahead on the basis of friendship.
A creature of Ishq *picks up his way by the light provided for him by God;*
And he is equally compassionate towards the Believer and the non-believer.
Let the difference between Kufr and Din sink deep into the pores of the heart:

And always remember that for one heart to flee from another heart in malice, hate, or dislike, is the greatest tragedy in human life.

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The Current Situation

The current situation of Muslims living in the West is not, in all respects, similar to that of the Muslims in either the Makkan or Madinan phase of the Prophet's mission. It is true that, at times, Muslim citizens encounter prejudice in western countries, but it is nothing like the persecution that the first Muslims suffered in Makkah. It is also true that western Muslims have many political rights and religious freedom, but they are not politically autonomous, as was the early community in Madinah. Yet as long as this freedom remains, we believe that they should— as every other citizen should— strive to influence their societies according to their conscience. It should not be forgotten that before the Qur'ān permitted believers to emigrate to Madinah and retaliate against their oppressors, Muhammadﷺ and his Companions exhausted all possible peaceful means of persuading the Quraysh to grant Muslims the freedom to practice and preach Islam in Makkah and that they endured terrible persecution for many years. It seems that a few of the Muslims residing in the West advocate or dream of bypassing the lesson set by Muhammadﷺ and his followers in Makkah in order to move immediately to what should be a last resort.

One thing is sure. We cannot change the fundamental character of the *dunyā*, the "near", the world as we find it, but we can in some measure change ourselves. When the Day of Judgement comes, it is not nations or tribes that stand trembling before their Creator; it is individual men and women, shorn of status, stripped naked of all their possessions (so the Prophet said) and unsupported by their own people. It may be that outward peace depends ultimately upon the inward peace "which passeth understanding". Those who scorn such a view as "quietist" must come forward with a better solution or hold their tongues. Is it really surprising if the way out of an earthly maze should be from the Centre, which is the point at which heaven and earth meet? Moreover, inward peace, by its very nature, shows itself in outward conduct. Every act of love, every act of friendship and every act of kindness is like an axe taken to the roots of war.

And yet, ignorant as most of us are of our true situation in the all-encompassing Divine Presence, nothing can eradicate from our innermost being the glint of light and the seed of peace. However far we may fall from the human norm, which is dominated by that light and that peace, we are never— so long as the breath of life is in us— completely lost. Islam lays great emphasis upon repentance and, if this word is stripped of its purely moralistic connotation, its basic meaning is a "turning back" towards the light after facing in the wrong direction; in other words, a reversal of our orientation. The followers of Islam and the "People of the Book" know that God waits patiently to respond to this act of repentance, nor does He ever tire of waiting for it so long as we live.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy,* Suhail Academy, 1988, 2000), p. 53.

[2] St. Mark, XII' 30. In Deuteronomy VI, 5, to which this is a reference, the element 'mind' is not mentioned, which makes no fundamental difference since the mind is strictly speaking a psychic faculty, and is therefore implicit in the word 'soul'. In St. Matthew, XXII, 37, on the

other hand, the element 'strength' is absent which again makes no difference inasmuch as physical energy and endurance are dominated by the will, which is also a psychic faculty.

[3] The address is to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

[4] Qur'ān, XL, 78.

[5] Muslims.

[6] There is no general consensus of opinion as to what religion is referred to, and certain Muslim rulers, in India and elsewhere, have made the name in question a loophole for tolerance towards their non-Muslim, non-Christian and non-Jewish subjects.

[7] Qur'ān, V, 69.

[8] Dr Jeffrey Lang, *Even Angels Ask,* Amana Books, 1993, reprint, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2000. We recommend the book to every one in general and the Muslims living in the West in particular.

[9] Qur'ān, 58: 20-21. For the details of this Law and its implications see Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi, *Mizān* 1st ed., (Lahore: Darul-Ishraq, 2001), pp. 183-280; *Burhān*, 1st ed., (Lahore: Danish Sara, 2000), pp. 135-8. Also see Shehzad Saleem, "Islam and Non-Muslims: A New Perspective", *Renaissance*, Vol. 12, No. 3, March 2002. URL—www.Renaissance.com.pk.

[10] For details see Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi, *Mizān* 1st ed., (Lahore: Darul-Ishraq, 2001), pp. 52-54; Shehzad Saleem, "Islam and Non-Muslims: A New Perspective", *Renaissance*, Vol. 12, No. 3, March 2002, pp. 13-34. (URL— www.Renaissance.com.pk.)

[11] It is also at its outset, that is, during its brief moment of 'Absoluteness', that the claims of a religion are for the most part formulated.

[12] Initially, all active adversaries were put to death whether they belonged to the Idolaters of Arabia or the People of the Book. Some of the Jews who were executed met their fate as a punishment for their breach of trust, after they had broken the pacts that had guaranteed them security and protection. The following verse mentions this first phase:

Keep fighting against them until persecution does not remain and [in the land of Arabia] Allah's religion reigns supreme. (2:192).

Though this verse addresses only the Idolaters, its last words "*and [in the land of Arabia] Allah's religion reigns supreme*", show that the followers of all other religions were also to be subdued until the religion of Islam reigned supreme in the Arabian peninsula. In the next phase, when the believers had been prepared for a final encounter with the *Kuffār*, who had been given ample time to contemplate on the consequences of their denial, the stage was set to pronounce the final judgement against the addressees of Muḥammadﷺ. Surah Tawbah describes in detail the events which took place in the final phase regarding the three major opponents: the Idolaters, the People of the Book and the Hypocrites. The surah is divided into three sections. In the first, the Idolaters of Arabia; in the second, the People of the Book, and, in the third, the Hypocrites are dealt with.

1. **For the Idolaters** Initially, the Idolaters were given an ultimatum of four months after which their punishment would take effect:

This is a declaration of acquittal from Allah and His Messenger from these Idolaters with whom you had made contracts. So move about in the land for four months but you should know that you are not beyond the grasp of Allah and Allah shall indeed degrade those who reject Him. (9:1-2)

Tribes who had honoured their contracts were provided immunity during the period of the contract. However, once the contract period ended, they were also be treated similarly:

But this action shall not be taken against those Idolaters with whom you have entered into alliance and who did not break the contract nor aided anyone against you. So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of their term: for Allah loves the pious. (9:4)

Later, this announcement was repeated for those people among these Idolaters who had not accepted faith until the day of *Ḥajj-i-Akbar* (9th Hijra). They were given a final extension by a proclamation made in the field of *'Arafat* on that day. According to the proclamation, this final extension would end with the last day of the month of *Muharram.* Before this period, they had to accept faith and demonstrate this acceptance by offering prayers and paying *Zakāh*; otherwise they would face execution at the end of that period. The *Qur'ān* says:

When the forbidden months are over, slay the Idolaters wherever you find them. Seize them, surround them and everywhere lie in ambush for them. But if they repent from their wrong beliefs and establish the prayer and pay Zakāh, then spare their lives. God is Oft-Forgiving and Ever Merciful. (9:5)

However, if a person asked for asylum to understand the teachings of Islam, he was to be given this asylum and no action was to be taken against him until this period was over.

If anyone among the Idolaters asks you for asylum, grant it to him so that he may hear the Word of Allah and then escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge. (9:6)

2. For the People of the Book. After the Idolaters, the fate of the People of the Book is stated in Surah Tawbah. Muslims were asked to fight them into subjugation unless they accepted the superiority of the Muslims by paying *Jizyah*:

Fight those who believe not in Allah or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission and are subdued. (9:29)

The difference in punishment between the Idolaters and the People of the Book seems to be based on the fact that while the former ascribed to polytheism, the latter were basically monotheists.

3. For the Hypocrites. In the third section of Surah Tawbah, the Hypocrites are taken to task and told that if they do not desist from this behaviour, they would meet a their fate also:

They swear by Allah that they said nothing [evil], but indeed they uttered blasphemy, and they did it after accepting Islam; and they meditated a plot which they were unable to carry out: this revenge of theirs was only because of the blessings with which Allah and His Messenger had enriched the Muslims. If they repent, it will be best for them; but if they turn back [to their evil ways], Allah will punish them with a grievous penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: they shall have none on earth to protect or help them. (9:74)

There are Hypocrites among the desert Arabs round you as well as among the Madinah folk: they are obstinate in hypocrisy: you do not know them: we know them: twice shall we punish them: and in addition shall they be sent to a grievous penalty. (9:101).

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[13] When the Qur'ān refers to them as "*He will punish these folk at your hands*" (9:14) it is the status of a Divine instrument of execution that is precisely in question. The Qur'ān uses the words *Ummat-i-Wasaṭ* (the intermediate community) for the Companions. *Thus have we made of you an intermediate group so that you be witnesses [of this religion] over the nations, and the Rasul be such a witness over you.* (2:143) This use is very meaningful since they stood between the Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) and the rest of the world of their times who were

able to observe the whole process of the Companions' *Shahādah* (bearing witness to the truth). Since these Companions were called *Shuhāda 'alā 'l-nās* (witnesses to the truth before other peoples) in this verse and since, as a result, the truth had become personified in their collective capacity, they too had the authority to punish those who knowingly denied the truth. Once Muḥammad ﷺ had completed his *Shahādah*, his Companions stood as an extension to this *Shahādah*. Muḥammad ﷺ himself initiated their task by writing letters to the various non-Muslim states of the world. Letters were written to the emperors of Abysinia, Egypt, Persia, Rome, Bahrain, Yamamah, Damascus and 'Amman. These states were required to submit to Muslim authority by paying *Jizyah* if they wanted to remain on their religions or face the consequences of war. These letters, as a result, demarcated the countries where the Companions were to go. In other words, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself informed his Companions about the areas and territories upon which the *Shahādah* would be completed once these Companions reached them, and which as result were to be subdued if they do not pay *Jizyah*. This also explains why this mission was divinely terminated with the departure of these immediate Companions. Moreover, after the departure of the Companions, since no one enjoys the status of *Shuhāda 'alā 'l-nās* (witnesses to the truth before other peoples), the right to punish people for deliberately denying the truth can no longer be exercised. In other words, after Muḥammad ﷺ and his Companions, it cannot be ascertained whether the basic truths have been revealed in its ultimate form nor can it be determined whether those who have denied have done so in spite of being convinced about it; consequently, Muslims after them cannot wage war to punish people for not accepting Islam. They must keep on presenting Islam to non-Muslims, who also, as a result of the above-mentioned premise, cannot be termed as the *Kuffār* (ungrateful truth-concealers).

This is strongly reminiscent of the Old Testament (Numbers, 34:1-12) where the Israelites were given instructions to go to the lands demarcated for them. It is evident from the Qur'ān (2:143) that just as the status of *Shuhāda 'alā 'l-nās* (witnesses to the truth before other peoples), was conferred on the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, a similar status was conferred on the Israelites after Moses ﷺ in their collective capacity.

[14] See note 13 above. Also see Section **"A Fifth Column"**

[15] It has already been explained before that God had chosen them for this task:

He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the religion of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this [Qur'ān]: [He chose you so that] the Rasul may be a witness [to this religion] before you, and you be witnesses to this religion before non-Muslims. (22:78)

The following verse also mentions their obligation:

Thus have we made you an intermediate group so that you be witnesses [to this religion] before the nations, and the Rasul be such a witness before you. (2:143)

[16] Qur'ān, 9:33, 61:9.

[17] These verses can be given a narrower or a wider interpretation. Its more immediate meaning is clearly the narrower one: the messenger is Muḥammadﷺ the religion of Truth is the Qur'ānic message and the idolaters are the pagan Arabs, Persians, Berbers, and certain other pagans. But what of the words that *He may make it prevail over all religion*? It is here that the crux of the matter may be said to lie.

Whatever the disadvantages of modern education, it serves to implant a more global concept of world history and geography than is normally held by members of traditional civilisations which tend to be 'Aloof' and 'introspective'. The wider knowledge is a mixed blessing, but where it exists it must be taken into account. An intelligent Muslim, living in the modern world, is bound to realise sooner or later, suddenly or gradually, not only that the Qur'ānic message has not been made to prevail over all religion, but also that Providence itself is directly responsible for the 'short-coming'. The shock of this realisation may shatter his belief, unless he be enabled to understand that the verse in question has a wider significance. In the narrower sense, all religion can only be taken to mean 'All religion in your part of the world'. But if all religion be interpreted in an absolute sense, and if idolaters be made to include such people as the Germans and Celts, many of whom were still pagan at the outset of Islam, then the religion of Truth must also be given its widest application, and the words 'once again' must be understood. (i.e. He it is who hath sent once again His messenger . . .), for the Divinity has sent messengers before, and never with anything other than the religion of Truth. These last four words, like the term Islam itself, can be taken in a universal sense, to include all true religion. The Qur'ān makes it clear that the religions of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus may be called 'Islam' in its literal meaning of 'submission to God'. In this sense Islam may be said to have been made to prevail over all religion. But in its narrower sense Islam has only been allowed to prevail over all religion in a limited part of the world. It is now fifteen hundred years since the revelation of the Qur'ān and Providence has allowed non-Qur'ānic modes of the religion of Truth to remain as barriers to the Qur'ānic message in more than half the globe.

[18] See for example Abu al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī, *Shahādat i Ḥaq*, 10th ed., Islamic Publications, 1961, Lahore; Y. Y. Haddad, "The Qur'ānic Justification of an Islamic Revolution: The view of Syed Quṭb", *The Middle East Journal*, 37 (1), 1983, pp. 17-20.

[19] For the details see Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi, *Burhān*, 1st ed., (Lahore: Danish Sara, 2000), pp. 135-8.

[20] Qur'ān, 24:55.

[21] In the words of the Qur'ān: "*Obey God and the Prophet and those of you who are in authority, and if you disagree among yourselves in any matter, refer it to God and the Prophet, if you are believers in Allah and the Last Day. This is better and more seemly as regards the consequences.*" (4:59) The above quoted directive was given to the Muslims when the Qur'ān was being revealed and the Prophet ﷺ himself was present among them. Consequently, they had the opportunity to refer back all their disagreements to the Prophet ﷺ. Obviously, since the authority of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ are eternal, therefore in all affairs in which an eternal directive has been given by them it is incumbent upon those in authority whether they are the rulers or members of the parliament to forever submit to them. Their orders and directives can only be obeyed after obeying Allah and his Prophet ﷺ, and if they do not overrule or transgress the limits adjudicated by these authorities.

[22] For details see Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi, *Mizān* 1st ed., (Lahore: Darul-Ishraq, 2001), pp. 98-99.

[23] For a detailed treatment of the topic see Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi, *Mizān* 1st ed., (Lahore: Darul-Ishraq, 2001), pp. 241-79.

[24] This section is adapted from Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ḥakīm's (Gai Eaton) *Remembering God*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2002.

[25] This illusion has been fostered by the example of Gandhi, a noble example but not one that can be followed in the world as it is. Gandhi faced a toothless lion, the British Empire in decline and governments that had lost the will to rule. It was left to his own people to kill him.

[26] Were it not for that distance it could not exist, and discord is the price it pays for existence.

[27] Muslims must remember the suffering undergone by the Prophet ﷺ particularly at Ṭā'if. Bilāl was put to the gravest of tortures. The limbs of ʻAmmār Ibn Yāsir were torn apart by strong camels.

[28] For instance, Prophet Moses﵇, as is evident from the Qur'ān, was directed to wage war only after he had fulfilled this condition. Since the Prophet Jesus﵇ and his Companions were not able to gain political authority in a piece of land, they never launched an armed struggle.

[29] (*Bukhārī*: No. 2957)

[30] ʻUthmānī, a Hanafite jurist writes:

> It is obvious from the *Hadith* narrated by Makḥūl (see at the end) that *Jihād* becomes obligatory with the ruler who is a Muslim and whose political authority has been established either through nomination by the previous ruler similar to how Abu Bakr transferred the reins [of his *Khilafah* to ʻUmar] or through pledging of allegiance by the ulema or a group of the elite ...in my opinion, if the oath of allegiance is pledged by ulema or by a group of the elite to a person who is not able to guard the frontiers and defend honour [of the people] organise armies or implement his directives by political force neither is he able to provide justice to the oppressed by exercising force and power, then such a person cannot be called 'Amīr' (leader) or 'Imām' (ruler). He, at best, is an arbitrator and the oath of allegiance is at best of the nature of arbitration and it is not at all proper to call him 'Amīr' (leader) or a 'Imām' (ruler) in any [official] documents nor should the people address him by these designations. The reason for this is that the basis of leadership and ruler-ship is power and authority and it does not hinge only upon the fact that he gets famous by this name. It is not imperative for the citizens to pledge allegiance to him or obey his directives and **no *Jihād* can be waged alongside him**. (Ẓafar Aḥmad ʻUthmānī, *I'lā al-Sunan*, 3rd ed., vol. 12, (Karachi: Idāratu 'l-Qur'ān wa ʻUlūmi 'l-Islāmiyyah, 1415 AH), pp. 15-16)

The complete text of the *Ḥadīth* is:

> "Makḥūl narrates from Abū Hurayrah who narrates from the Prophet: Jihād is obligatory upon you with a Muslim ruler whether he is pious or impious, and the prayer is obligatory upon you behind every Muslim whether he is pious or impious even if he is guilty of the major sins and the prayer is obligatory upon every Muslim whether he is pious or impious even if he is guilty of the major sins." (*Abū Dā'ūd:* No. 2533)

Ibn Qudāmah, a Ḥanbalite jurist, writes:

> The matter of *Jihād* rests with the ruler [of a state] and his Ijtihād. The opinion he forms in this regard must be obeyed by the citizens of his country. (Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī*, vol. 8, (Riyad: Maktabah al-Riyad al-Hadithah,1981), p. 352)

Māwardī, a Shāfi'ite authority, while enumerating the obligations of a Muslim ruler says:

> His sixth obligation is to conduct *Jihād* against those who show hostility against Islam... (Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah,* 1st ed., (Beirut: Daru'l-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1990, p. 52)

In the words of Imam Farāhī:

> In one's own country, without migrating to an independent piece of land, *Jihād* is not allowed. The tale of Abraham and other verses pertaining to migration testify to this. The Prophet's life also supports this view. The reason for this is that if *Jihād* is not waged by a person who holds political authority, it amounts to anarchy and disorder. (*Farāhī, Majmū'ah Tafāsīr-i-Farāhī*, 1st ed., (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991, p. 56.)

While commenting on the underlying reasons which form the basis of state authority for *Jihād*, Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, writes:

> The first reason [for this condition] is that God Almighty does not like the dissolution and disintegration of even an evil system until a strong probability exists that those who are out to disintegrate the system will provide people with an alternative and a righteous system. Anarchy and disorder are unnatural conditions. In fact, they are so contrary to human nature that even an unjust system is preferable to them....this confidence [that a group will be able to harmonise a disintegrated system and integrate it into a united whole] can be reposed in such a group only as has actually formed a political government and has such control and discipline within the confines of its authority that the group can be termed as *al-Jama'Ah* [the State]. Until a group attains this position, it may strive [by

religiously allowable means] to become *al-Jamāʿah* —and that endeavour would be its *Jihād* for that time— but it does not have the right to wage an 'Armed' *Jihād.*

The second reason is that the import of power which a group engaged in war acquires over the life and property of human beings is so great that the sanction to wield this power cannot be given to a group the control of whose leader over his followers is based merely on his spiritual and religious influence on them [rather than being based on legal authority]. When the control of a leader is based merely on his spiritual and religious influence, there is not sufficient guarantee that the leader will be able to stop his followers from *fasād fi ʾl-arḍ* [creating a situation of disorder in the society]. Therefore, a religious leader does not have the right to allow his followers to take out their swords [that is to wage an armed struggle] merely on the basis of his spiritual influence over them, for once the sword is unsheathed there is great danger that it will not care for right and wrong and that those who drew it will end up doing all [the wrong which] they had sought to end. Such radical groups as desire revolution and the object of whom is nothing more than disruption of the existing system and deposition of the ruling party to seize power for themselves play such games —and they can, for in their eyes disruption of a system is no calamity, nor is cruelty of any kind an evil. Everything is right to them [as long as it serves their purpose]. However, the leaders of a just and righteous party must see whether they are in a position to provide people with a system better than the one they seek to change and whether they will be able to stop their followers from doing such wrong as they themselves had sought to root out. If they are not in that position, then they do not have the right to play games with the life and property of people on the basis of their confidence in mere chances and to create greater disorder than the one they had sought to end. (*Daʿwat-i-Dīn awr us kā Ṭarīqah-i-kār* (Urdu), Faran Foundation, Lahore, 2000, ch. 14, pp 241-2.

[31] Sayyid Sābiq, *Fiqhu ʾl-Sunnah*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, (Beirut: Daru ʾl-Fikr, 1980), p. 30.

[32] *Bukhārī.* No. 2734.

[33] Qurʾān, 4:75

[34] Qurʾān, 8:66.

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[35] The Qur'ān says: (8:60) Muster against them all the men and cavalry at your disposal so that you can strike terror into the enemies of Allah and of the believers and others beside them who may be unknown to you, though Allah knows them. And remember whatever you spend for the cause of Allah shall be repaid to you. You shall not be wronged.

[36] This section is abridged from Jaffery Lang, *Even Angel's Ask*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2001.

[37] Muḥammad 'Abd al Salām Faraj, who was executed on 15 April 1982 along with others accused of assassinating President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, writes in his *The Neglected Duty*:

> Most commentators on the Qur'ān have said something about a certain verse they call the Verse of the Sword (9:5). Here is the verse: 'When the holy months are over, kill polytheists wherever you find them; capture them, besiege them, ambush them."
>
> Ibn Kathīr noted in his exegesis of the Quran: Al Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim said, "[This verse] annuls any treaty between the Prophet-blessings and salvation be upon him -and any infidel, along with any contract or any accord." Al 'Ūfi said about the verse, according to Ibn 'Abbās: "No contract, no defence pact with an infidel was recognized after this dissolution of obligations fixed by treaty was revealed."
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> The exegete Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Juzayy al Kalbī said: "The abrogation of the order to be at peace with the infidels, to pardon them, to be passively in contact with diem, and to endure their insults came before the order to fight them. That makes it superfluous to repeat the abrogation of the order to live at peace with the infidels in every passage of the Quran. This order to live at peace with them is given in 114 verses spread among 54 surahs. All of those verses are abrogated by 9:5 and 2:216 (you are prescribed to fight)"

[38] There are certain rulings of the Islamic Law which are solely related to the *Kuffār* of the times of the Prophet and cannot be related to other non-Muslims. When considered in the perspective of the ***Cosmic Divine Law of Prevailing*** the misinterpretation becomes evident. That is why we have termed these as Misplaced Rulings. The list has been drawn from the research carried out by the *Al-Mawrid* Academy of Islamic Sciences, based on the research made by its founder Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi.

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[39] Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyatu 'l-Mujtahid,* 1st ed., vol. 4, (Beirut: Daru 'l-Ma'rifah, 1997), p. 304; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jaziri, *Kitābu 'l-Fiqh 'alā Madhāhibi 'l-Arba'ah,* 7th ed., vol. 5, (Beirut: Dar Ahya'i 'l-Turath al-'Arabi, 1980), pp. 422-5; Wahbah al-Rakhīlī, *al-Fiqhu 'l-Islāmī wa Adillatuhū,* 1st ed. vol. 6, (Damascus: Daru 'l-Fikr), p. 186.

[40] *Bukhārī:* No. 6922

[41] Qur'ān, 9:5.

[42] *Muslim*: No. 22.

[43] *Nassa'ī:* No. 3966.

[44] The original research that forms the basis of this inference has been carried out by Javed Aḥmad Ghamidi. For details see, Ghamidi, *Burhān*, 2nd ed., (Lahore: Danish Sara, 2000), pp. 127-31.

[45] This is the view of Aḥmad, Shāfi'ī and Ibn Ḥazm. For details see, Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī,* vol. 8, (Riyad: Maktabah al-Riyad al-Hadithah, 1981), pp. 500-1; Shāfi'ī , *Kitabu 'l-Umm*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, (Beirut: Daru 'l-Ma'rifah, 1973), pp. 174-5; Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥalla*, 1st ed., vol. 5, (Beirut: Daru 'l-Fikr), pp. 413-4. In this regard, the Hanafite jurists are however of the view that death was only prescribed for the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet's times. As far as polytheists of other times and lands are concerned they cannot be put to death if they do not accept Islam. Like the People of the Book, they too can be allowed to remain on their faith if they accept the superiority of Islam and pay *Jizyah*. For details see, Sarakhsī, *Kitāb 'l-Mabsūṭ*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, (Beirut: Daru 'l-Ma'rifah, 1978), p. 7; Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkāmu 'l-Qur'ān* 1st ed., vol. 3, (Daru 'l-Kitabi 'l-'Arabi), p. 93. Mālik and Ibn Qayyim are of the view that *Jizyah* can be taken from all types of Idolaters. For details see, Mālik, *Al-Mudawwanatu 'l-Kubrā*, 1st ed., vol. 3, (Beirut: Daru'l-Fikr, 1986), p. 406; Ibn Qayyim, *Zādu 'l-Ma'ād*, 14th ed., vol. 3, (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1986), p. 154.

[46] Qur'ān, 9:5.

[47] Qur'ān, 9:29.

[48] 'Abdu 'l-Karīm Zaydān, *Aḥkāmu 'l-Dhimiyyīn wa 'l- Musta'minīn Fi Dāri 'l Islām*, 1st ed., (Baghdad: Maktabatu 'l-Quds, 1982), pp. 22-60.

[49] The *Mithāq* (treaty) of Madinah made with Jewish tribes by the Prophet (p.b.u.h) is an example of this type of citizenship.

[50] Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkāmu 'l-Qur'ān* 1st ed., vol. 2, (Daru 'l-Kitabi 'l-'Arabi), p. 228; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ānu 'l-'Aẓīm*, 1st ed, vol. 2, (Lahore: Amjad Academy, 1982), p. 68.

[51] Qur'ān, 3:28.

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[52] Qur’ān, 4:144.
[53] Qur’ān, 5:51.
[54] This is the opinion of Shāfi‘ī and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal. For details see, *Al-Mughnī*, vol. 7, (Riyad: Maktabah al-Riyad al-Hadithah, 1981), pp. 652-3; Shāfi‘ī , *Kitabu ’l-Umm*, 2nd ed., vol. 6, (Beirut: Daru ’l-Ma‘rifah, 1973), p. 38.
[55] Abū Dā’ūd: No. 4506.
[56] Dārimī: No. 2356.
[57] Since the word *Mushrik* is used in this Hadith, the directive it mentions does not even pertain to the People of the Book of the Prophet’s times.
[58] ‘Abdu ’l-Raḥmān Muḥaddith Mubārakpūrī, *Tuḥfatu ’l-Aḥwadhī,* 1st ed., vol. 2, (Faisalabad: Diya al-Sunnah), p. 397.
[59] *Bukhārī*: No. 6288
[60] Consequently, the following *Hadith* (which contains a similar directive) also relates specifically to the People of the Book of the Prophet’s times. It has no bearing on the People of the Book of later times: “Don’t initiate salutations to the Jews or the Christians, and force them to the narrowest of paths when one of them meets you on your way.” (Muslim: No. 1602)
[61] *Tirmidhī*: No. 2702.
[62] Qur’ān, 98:6. For verses of a similar meaning, also see 3:10, 63, 131; 4:56, 115; 7:41; 8:50; 9:63, etc.
[63] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Sārimu ’l-Maslūl ‘Alā Shātimi ’l-Rasūl,* 1st ed., (Multan: Nashru ’l-Sunnah), pp. 61-180.
[64] Qur’ān, 9:113.
[65] *Muslim*: No. 1891.
[66] *Abū Dā’ūd, Sunan,* 1st ed., vol 3, (Beirut: Daru ’l-Jayl, 1992), p.7.
[67] Muḥammad Iqbal, *Javīd Nāmah,* in *Kulliyāt-i-Iqbāl,* Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1994, p. 673. For a translation see A. Q. Niaz, *Iqbal’s Javid Namah,* Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 1984, p. 329.

ISLAM AND MUSLIM NON-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Khurshid A. Nadim

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

On what lines does Islam want to establish relations with non-Muslims and specially People of the Book? This question carries lot of significance in the construction of a global system. In our view, this question can be seen from two dimensions: the intellectual and the practical. From intellectual stand point Islam is the last of the Abrahamic faiths. Revelation ended with the last Messenger of Allah, Muhammad therefore, it become necessary for us to know the last teaching revealed by God. Those who consider divine revelation as a source of guidance but do not believe in the claim made by Islam can't deny this historical fact that since Islam, no international civilization has emerged that connects itself with the tradition of Abrahamic faiths. Thus, it is incumbent upon them to know from a realistic point of view the teaching of Islam in this regard.

From practical perspective, the question is significant in the sense that there are more than one billion Muslims inhabiting this globe now. The number of the independent Muslim states approximates 56. Therefore, Muslim attitude towards non-Muslims will definitely affect the global system. Similarly, Muslims would take certain steps as reaction to the steps taken by the non-Muslim. Every such step would have consequences for the world affairs. Hence, both from the intellectual as well as practical perspective, it is important to learn about Islam's teachings regarding non-Muslims. To get the right answer to this question, few basic premises have to be understood. The correct answer to the question expends on this understanding. In this chapter, we will attempt to explain those basic premises.

Prophet and Messenger or *Nabī* and *Rasūl*

It is evident from Holy Qur'ān that those sent for the guidance of humanity are divided into two groups i.e. *Nabī* and *Rasūl*. There are certain similarities between the two groups and certain differences. For example:

1. Every *Rasūl* of Allah is also a Nabī but it is not necessary that every *Nabī* be also a *Rasūl*. Qur'ān has mentioned these two groups in this manner.

2. If one of the individuals of a nation, to whom a Prophet or Messenger is sent, deliberately dismisses the preaching of the Prophet or Messenger would surely be a loser in the world hereafter but the end of those addressed by Prophet or Messenger in this world may not necessarily be the same. Those addressed by a Prophet, in case of their refusal, may keep on living and can progress from worldly point of view but this is not the case of a Messenger. Those addressed by the Messenger (*Rasūl*) have no capacity to refuse. In case they refuse, it becomes essential that they are perished from the face of the earth and they face the punishment which will be sent on a large scale when the world will end. This worldly punishment may take different forms. It may be in the form of rain, earthquake or storm. It may also be in the form of swords wielded by the companions of the Messenger. The Holy Qur'ān has enumerated all these forms. For instance, at one occasion, it is said:

> "Each one of them We seized For his crime: of them, Against some We sent A violent tornado (with showers Of stones); some were caught By a (mighty) Blast; some We caused the earth To swallow up; and some We drowned (in the waters): It was not Allah Who Injured (or oppressed) them: They injured (and oppressed) Their own souls." (Qur'ān 29:40)

Last Messenger Muhammad's companions were told:

> "Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them."(Qur'ān 9:14)

3. A Prophet (*Nabī*) may be dominated by his nation. Even there is a possibility that he embraces martyrdom at their hands but in the case of Messenger, this is not the situation. A Messenger surely emerges dominant and never faces defeat at the hands of his nation. Allah has narrated both the things in the Holy Qur'ān. Among the crimes of the Jews, Allah tells that they committed the murder of their Prophets. About Messengers, Allah narrates His principle as follows:

> "Allah has decreed; "It is I and My messengers who must prevail" For Allah is one full of strength, able to enforce His Will."(Qur'ān 58:21)

4. When a messenger is sent, he comes as judgment of God. God separates his addressees in clearly defined groups. Prophet Muhammad was a Messenger (*Rasūl*). Therefore Allah divided his addressees into three groups. Those who believed in him, those who explicitly disbelieved in him and the hypocrites. The details of this division have been given in chapter *Al-Tawba*. In case of a Prophet (*Nabī*) this division is not very clear. His addresses would be dealt within the hereafter.

5. The way addressees of a Messenger are dealt within this world is based on revelation and not *Ijtihād*. It means that all matters are decided by God. The Messenger and his companions are bounding to act according to revelation. Through what stages a Messenger passes in this process and

what decisions does be take is all directed by revelation. *Rasūl* does not take any step on the basis of his *ijtīhād.*

Furthermore, as this matter relates to the implementation of Allah's decision, so all the instructions given to the Messenger in this process become specific to the Messenger and have no connection with the general law. As soon as the action completes and Allah's Messenger passes away from the world, this special law (*Sharīʿah*) reaches its logical end. Now no non Messenger can take any step on the basis of these laws.

The way this difference of *Nabī* and *Rasūl* effects the legal matter can be understood keeping in view the following three things:-

1. Prophet Muhammad was not only Allah's Messenger but he was the last Messenger. The Divine court of God that had been established with the coming of earlier messengers was finally and lastly established with the coming of Prophet Muhammad. In this way, his status of Prophethood has two dimensions. The one general and the other specific. Specifically, he came for the inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula as the judgment of God and by his domination brought about his judgment day on a smaller scale. He completely made Allah's religion prevail on the land of Arabs. Qur'ān has stated this fact more than once. For example, in *Sura Tawba*, it is said:

> "It is He Who hath sent His Messenger with Guidance and Religion of Truth, to proclaim it overall religions, even though the pagans may detest (it)" (Qur'ān 9:33)

In view of this special status of Prophet Muhammad, he was given a special *sharīʿah* which is not applicable upon us. Therefore deriving permanent and general rules from this special *sharīʿah* is not right. This will become clearer when we will apply this rule on non-Muslim and the people of the Book in the coming chapters.

The second status of Prophet Muhammad is that he is the last Prophet and Messenger of Allah. In this way, he is sent to all that humanity which will be born till the doomsday. In this capacity, he gave that *sharīʿah* which is concerned with whole of the humanity and which is not concerned with those divine laws which were especially for the nation directly addressed by him. From this perspective, he is the last source of divine guidance till the last day. Therefore, the way that Prophet Muhammad adopted as religion was to a great extant, the same as followed by the earlier people as a result of constant efforts of Allah's Prophets. Prophet Muhammad revived it, cleaned it of its impurities and made some additions to it.

It should be clear about the Holy Qur'ān that in fact it is the story of a Prophet's life. It states how the Messenger has to pass through different stages. What specific instructions are given to him and what happy tides and when he is assisted with angels. Holy Qur'ān also suggests the attitude of Messenger's addressees at different steps and the end they are going to meet.

If this fact is not kept in view while studying Qur'ān, there is a great possibility of confusing the orders. The matter that is related to Allah's specific law, if made general law would be an encroachment on Allah's rights. Thus, it is important to know which verse belongs to the age of admonition and which to the age of *hijrah* (migration).

Not knowing this difference may lead us to confusion and misunderstandings. At one occasion Qur'ān says:

"So lose not heart, Nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery If ye are true in Faith." (Qur'ān 3:139).

This happy tiding is concerned with the companions of the Prophet. By contemplating on Qur'ān, one can know the time of the revelation of the verse. This verse was revealed after the battle of Uhd.

In it Muslims are being encouraged in respect of past events. According to Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, it is an important part of the chapter of purification. If we take this verse in the general sense, it means that all those who are faithful will always be dominant upon their opponents. On the basis of this verse a number of pious people in different historical periods took action. They thought that only faith and steadfastness can guarantee domination over the enemy. Consequently, they failed in their action. One of the examples in this regard is *Taḥrīk-e-Mujāhidīn*. If the general meaning of the verse is taken, then Syed Aḥmad Shahīd must have succeeded. It does not mean that God forbid, Allah's promise is not true. Rather it means that we have given general colouring to a special idea. The issue related to the companions of the Prophet and Allah's special law was taken to be concerned to other people and a general order derived from it. If the results are not according to our expectations, the divine law has not be blamed but our understanding of it.

II. The second example in this regard concerns the meaning of a verse from *Surah Nūr*. It says:

> "Allah has promised, to those Among you who believe And work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them In the land, inheritance (Of power), as He granted it To those before them; that He will establish in authority Their religion-the one Which He has chosen for them; And that He will change (Their state), after the fear In which they (lived), to one Of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) And not associate aught with Me'. If any do reject Faith after this, they are Rebellious and wicked."(Qur'ān 24:55).

In this verse "those who believe" refers to the companions of the Prophet. If we take the verse in general sense, it would mean that this promise of God is to all the believers. While history stands witness to the fact that a number of faithful people passed away without becoming rulers and in state of fear. The question here is that if this promise was for all the believers, why it could not materialize in the case of a number of individuals and groups. The answer is that the promise was fulfilled for those with whom it was made. The problem does not lie in the promise but in our understanding of Qur'ān. In Surah Tawba, it is said:

> "But if they violate their oath after their covenant, and taunt you for your faith: Fight ye the chiefs of un-faith; For their

oaths are nothing to them. That thus they may be restrained." (Qur'ān 9:12)

In this verse, the leaders of 'disbelief' are fixed. When Allah's Messenger fulfilled the divine duty entrusted in him so that there remains no excuse for the disbelievers and the decision to furnish those who repudiated the truth had been taken, Muslims were asked to kill these leaders of disbelief. These leaders of disbelief were fixed by revelation and the order to kill them was also issued under the divine law. Hence, this verse also concerns the same law which is specific to Prophet Muhammad's Prophet hood. If we take it in the general sense, then every one would decide the leaders of disbelief by his/her own will and venture to kill them. One can guess the situation of Muslims and the world at large if this happens.

Many other evidences from Holy Qur'ān can be provided that emphasize the significance of ascertaining about the verse of Qur'ān whether they are concerned with Allah's principle of *Itmām-e-Ḥujjat* or it is related to general circumstances.

III.One of the dimensions of this Prophet-specific law is concerned with the companions. We come to know from the Holy Qur'ān that like the status of Prophethood, there is a status of being witness (*shahādah*) when Allah establishes His divine court in the world, it results in the domination of a Messenger. This domination may take two forms. One of the ways is that Allah finishes the opponents of the Messenger through Messenger and his companions and gives them sovereignty in the land. In this case, the companions of the Prophet are given the status of witnesses (*shahādah*) after the Messenger and under this divine law, they take some steps. The companions take some action in order to complete the mission. These steps taken by the companion are also specific to them and can not be declared generally applicable.

The revolution brought about by Prophet Muhammad took the above mentioned from. As a result, the companions of the Prophet were raised to the status of witnesses and in that capacity, they performed some actions. For example, they told the people of Persia and Rome to either embrace Islam and become their brother. Otherwise, their swords will decide between them and they would have to pay *Jizya* (a tax) and live under the domination of Muslim governments. After the companion of the Prophet, no individual or group has the right to relay this kind of message to any nation or country. Inviting people to Islam will continue till the end but giving ultimatums to live under the domination of Islam can not be justified.

The way Holy Qur'ān mentions this status of witness will be described here. There is a place in Qur'ān where the status of witness is stated in general sense:

> "And the earth will shine with the glory of its Lord; The record (of deeds) will be placed upon; the Prophet and witnesses will be brought forward and a just decision pronounced between them, and they will not be wronged (in least)."(Qur'ān 39:69).

This verse makes it evidently clear that on the Day of Judgment, Allah will let another group stand beside Prophets and ask them if they conveyed the message of the religion to others.

Now we will see those evidences from the Holy Qur'ān where the status of being witness is mentioned with specific reference to companions of the Prophet. According to Qur'ān, the Messenger of Allah stands witness to a group of people and then this group stands witness for the people to come. This group serves as intermediary between the Messenger and other people. Holy Qur'ān says:

> "Thus have We made of you and *Ummah* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger a witness over yourselves."(Quran 2: 143).

The Holy Qur'ān also clarifies that those who fulfil this duty are chosen by God in the similar manner. He chooses some great personalities for the responsibility of Prophethood. Holy Qur'ān says:

> "He has chosen you and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion, it is the cult of your father Abraham, it is He who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (revelations, that

the Messenger may be a witness for you and ye be witnesses for mankind." (Qur'ān 22:78)

Those who are chosen for this witness are those for whom no excuse has been left to disbelieve. In case they disbelieve, punishment is awarded to them. The companions of Prophet did the same and they executed the disbelievers with their swords.

At this moment, this should also be clear that since the Prophet stood witness on his companion who were further chosen to witness upon other people, so the companions' witness is an extension of Prophet's witness. Consequently, the process that Prophet Muhammad initiated by writing letters to different leaders of the states was later accomplished by his companions. The areas whose ruler received letter from Prophet Muhammad included Ethopia, Egypt, Persia, Behran, Yemen, Syria and Oman. After they received Prophet's invitation, they were bound to embrace Islam under the light of divine law or they had to submit to the sovereignty of Islam by paying *Jizya*. Those who refused to do so saw the implementation of this law the lands of Prophet's companions.

The Messenger, as has already been mentioned, does not take any step in this whole process on the basis of *Ijtihād* (personal discretion). Therefore, the letters that were dispatched by the Prophet were written under God's command. In other words, it was decided by God which area had to be conquered by the companions.

This situation of Messenger's dominance was created before when Allah made Moses and his companions victorious over their opponents. As a result, it is obvious from Holy Qur'ān that Allah appointed Moses' Companions, Israelites to stand witness after him. We come to know from Torah that the areas where God's law by Moses had to be implemented were already determined by Allah (Numbers 34:1 to 22).

The explanation regarding the status of bring witness shows that the steps taken by Allah's Messenger and his companions in their collective capacity were the part of the Divine law which started with Prophet Muhammad and was completed during the reign of rightly-guided Caliphs. Their role in this mission was that of Divine agents just like the angels who play a role in the implementation of Divine law in normal circumstances. It is evident that we cannot imitate these collective steps of the companions. As the status of Prophethood cam to an end with Prophet Muhammad, similarly the status of being witness came to an end with the companions. We will invite people towards religion but cannot punish them in case they refuse to accept because it is imperative that they are not left with any excuse. Now it is difficult for us to assess if an individual or nation is not left with any excuse and only Allah can know it who knows the secrets of the hearts. Even the Messenger does not decide this on the basis of his Ijtihād. While describing the difference between the non-Muslim and non-believer, we will further elucidate this idea. The distinction is also related to the same Divine principle.

Non-Muslim and non-Believer

As there is as difference between Messenger and Prophet in a positive sense, similarly, there is a difference between non-Muslim and non-believer in a negative sense. Every non-believer is also a non Muslim but every non-Muslim is not non-believer necessarily. *Al-Kāfirūn* is one of the terms of Qur'ān just like *al-Mushrikūn*. Whenever Qur'ān uses the term *al-Mushrikūn*, it refers to polytheists of Arabia. We cannot take it in a general sense. In this light of Qur'ānic precedents, if we try to understand this term, the definition of non-believer would be as follows: " An individual or a nation directly addressed by a Messenger, irrespective of his religion, who knowingly, deliberately and having known the truth refuses to believe in the Messenger's message is a non-believer's."

We will explain this definition in the light of Prophet's period.

When Prophet Muhammad invited his nation towards Islam, he addressed them by saying "O nation" or "O People". Till the end of Makkan era, he followed the same style. During this period, he never called them "O non-believers". The reason for this is obvious. At that time, it was not easy to determine for a human being whether some one was deliberately refusing to believe truth or one could not understand the message or could not pay serious attention to it. Whenever a new idea is launched in a society, people behave in the same manner. Some contemplate upon it seriously and come to believe it as a truth. Others consider it right but do not believe in it. Prejudice or benefit or both stand in their way of belief. Yet some other does not consider a new idea seriously until it achieves some popularity in the society. The same happened with the Prophetic message in the Makkan period. Some people accepted it with full understanding right from the beginning like Abū Bakr and S. Khadīja. Others refused to accept it while they were convinced of its truth like Abū Jahl. Yet some other did not take it seriously in the beginning but different incidents one after the other led them to pay heed to it like "Umar and Ḥamza.

During the early years of Prophethood i.e. the last part of Makkan period, the nation addressed by Prophet clearly divided into two groups. One group accepts Prophet's invitation while the other groups refuse to accept this message knowingly and deliberately. This was the time when Allah orders His Prophet and his companions to migrate. Now the people who remained behind and who refused to accept the truth knowingly are declared non-believers and Allah's Messenger addressed them as "O non-believers" for the first time.

In case of Prophet Muhammad, the period of preaching continued for 13 years. At the end of his period, he migrated from his nation. Those who refused to believe were called non-believers and the Messenger departed towards a *Dār-ul-Hijrat* (house of migration). The understanding of this process requires us to keep certain things in view.

I. The matter that who refuses to accept the truth deliberately and who is unable to understand and it can only be decided by Allah since He only know the secrets of he hearts. We come to know from the Holy Qur'ān that no Messenger is entitled to decide on the basis of his personal discretion that his nation has divided into two groups and that he should migrate now. Holy Qur'ān illustrates this with the example of the Prophet Yūnus who took a decision based on his judgement which was net appropriate in Allah's view. Holy Qur'ān has narrated this event in the following way:

> "And remember Dhu al-Nūn, when he departed in wrath; He imagined that We had no power him, but he cried through the depths of darkness "There is no God but thou, glory to thee, I was in deed wrong."(Qur'ān 21:87).

During the Makkan period, when the cruelties of polytheists reached its zenith and it seemed that no good is left in them, Allah's Messenger intended to leave his nation. Allah commends His Prophet to be patient and put before him the example of Prophet Yūnus. In a way He told the Prophet that the decision to migrate has not to be taken by Ijtihād. It would rather be decided by Allah. The Holy Qur'ān says:

> "So wait with patience for the command of the Lord, and the not like the companion of the fish, when he cried out in agony."(Qur'ān 68:48).

II. When the situation became clear in the light of Allah's decision and the time to migrate approached *Sura Al-Kāfirūn* was revealed which clearly expressed freedom from those who deliberately refused to accept the truth. At this occasion, they were declared non-believers. When no excuse was left to them, Allah Himself stated that now these people have become non-believers. Allah says:

> "Say; O ye that reject faith, I worship not that ye worship, nor will ye worship that I will worship.... To you be your way, and to me mine." (Qur'ān 109:1-6)

III.If a Messenger can not say a certain thing about an individual or a group, how can a common man do this? We have no measure to know if a person is refusing to accept the truth after knowing it or the message has not been properly conveyed to him. In other words, the message has not reached him correctly. Thus, we cannot issue a decree about a nation or individual that the proof of truth has been established for them/him. It is obvious that without determining this matter, we are not allowed to take any step which is conditioned by the establishment of proof of truth. This is the reason Allah kept these issues related to revelation and His Messenger instead of common Muslims.

Now come to the definition of non-Muslim. In our view, a non-Muslim can be defined in the following terms: "A person is non-Muslim if he/she does not accept Islam as religion or refuses one of the principles of religion in theory. This matter is related to a person's oral or written claim and his/her external actions". According to this definition, a person who openly proclaims that he/she is not a Muslim or declares himself/herself to be a follower of another religion and performs actions like idol-worship etc., would be considered non-Muslim. On the other hand, a person who is involved in such actions that are unlawful in Islam such as consumption of alcohol etc., but calls himself/herself a Muslim would be considered a Muslim. At the most, we may call hem/her sinful.

From the perspective of this definition, we cannot call any individual or group as non-believer. There are either Muslims or non-Muslims. It does not mean that there are no people in this world who refuse to accept the truth knowingly. Surely, there would be such people but since we have no way to know this, therefore, their matter is resting with their Lord. We can only make some opinion on the basis of outward ness according to which any one who does not accept Islam as religion is non-Muslim. However, non-Muslims can be divided in further groups. Those who consider monotheism as the base

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of religion like People of the Book and those who do not believe in any such basis like polytheists and atheists.

People of the Book and other non-Muslims

A study of Qur'ān shows that people's attitude towards monotheism is of great value in God's eyes. God has separated those who believe in one God inspite of their deviance in understanding of concept, from those who are polytheists or don't believe in God at all. As the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* (People of Book) is fact consider monotheism as the foundation of religion, the nature of their relationship with Islam is different. Another common value among Jews, Christians and Muslims is that they all associate themselves with the Ibrahim. The academic world calls these three religions as Abrahamic faiths. The difference between *Ahl-e-Kitāb* and non-Muslims will be discussed in detail.

(i) The matter that monotheism is the common value of Abrahamic faiths is very clearly stated in the Holy Qur'ān. In *Sura Āl-e-'Imrān*, it is said:

> "Say: O people of the book; Come to common terms as between us and you, that we worship non- but Allah, that we associate no partners with Him. (Qur'ān 3:64).

This doctrine can be found in New and Old Testaments. The *Ahl-e-Kitāb* even today believe in the same doctrine about monotheism. However, deviation cannot be ruled out which resulted in a number of sects in Judaism and Christianity. There exist even today such Christian sects who reject any biological relationship between God and Jesus Christ. Therefore, if we mention Jews and Christians as a group, we will include them in the group of monotheists. It is exactly as in Muslims, there are some groups who have such a view of monotheism that is not endorsed by the Holy Qur'ān but we cannot call them polytheist because they hate polytheism just like other Muslims. The matter is just that of interpretation.

(ii)No one can deny that fact that *Ahl-e-Kitāb* have a relationship with Prophet Ibrahim (AS) This matter is proved by Holy Qur'ān that prior to the coming of Prophet Muhammad, all the Prophets from Ibrahim's seed belonged to Israelites. Israel is Prophet Ya'qūb's name who was Prophet Isḥāq's son and Prophet Ibrāhīm's grandson. Israelites were chosen for the leadership of the world and they enjoyed this status for a long time. Their deviations, one after the other, resulted in their dismissal from this grand status and this responsibility was assigned to the Progeny of Ismā'īl. In this way a large number of companions of Holy Prophet were ethnically children of Ismā'īl.

(iii) Islam's flexible attitude towards *Ahl-e-Kitāb* instead of polytheists is evident from certain other things. For example; in the war between Roman Christian's and Zoroastrians, Muslims sympathies were clearly with the Christian and Holy Qur'ān predicted Christian victory. *Sura Rūm* starts with the following words:

> "The Roman Empire has been defeated. In a land closed by, but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious."(Qur'ān 30:2-3).

According to Ibn 'Abbās (RA), some other companions and people who came after them (*tābi'īn*), in this war Muslim sympathies were with Christian on account of their doctrine proximity with Islam. Similar feelings were also found in kind-hearted Christians of that time who preferred Muslims over the polytheists. The Christian ruler of Ethiopia offered refuge to Muslims and did not agree to return them despite the demands of the polytheists. It was at a time when Muslims were weak and had no political standing.

The proximity that the Christians felt towards Muslims can be gauged from the fact that after Muslim's migration to Ethiopia, when the news about Prophet Muhammad and Islam was disseminated in that area, a delegation of Christians cam from there to Makkah to investigate about Islam and met Prophet Muhammad in *Masjid al-Ḥarām*. They posed some questions to Prophet which he answered. Prophet invited them to Islam and recited some verses from the Holy Qur'ān. On listening the Qur'ān, the members of the delegation started weeping. They testified that the verses were God's words and they embraced Islam. A number of people from Quraysh gathered there to have a glimpse of the scene. When the Ethiopians intended to return, Abū Jahl met them along with some of his friends. He reproached them that they had come to research about the Prophet and they themselves are to believe in him. They did not like to indulge in any debate with Abū Jahl and told him that they could not deliberately deprive themselves from guidance.

(vi).On the occasion of conquest of Makkah, when the time had arrived to punish the disbelievers in the Messenger under the Divine law through the Prophet's companion, Allah divided the disbelievers into two groups: Polytheists and *Ahl-e-Kitāb*. The punishment decided for the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* was not as severe compared to the one that had to be given to the Polytheists. About them it was said:

> "But when the forbidden months are passed then, fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (Off war) but, if they repent, and establish regular prays, and practise regular charity then open the way for them, for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful."(Qur'ān 9:5).

Thus, polytheists have only two options: to embrace Islam or in case of refusal, their mass killing. At this point, it should remain clear that the punishment mentioned for Arab polytheists is related to the special law of God about Messengers that we have discussed in detail in the previous pages. This law became invalid after Prophet passed away from this world. Therefore, today no Muslim ruler, group or individual has the right to implement this type of punishment on the polytheists of his era.

As against the polytheists, Islam gave the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* the choice to follow their religion on the condition of acceptance of Muslim political sovereignty. After this they can live as the citizens of Muslim state having full freedom to act upon their religion. In *sura Tawba*, it is said:

> "The people of the book, until they pay the *Jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. (Qur'ān 9:29)

There is no other reason of this destination except that *Ahl-e-Kitāb* are monotheists.

(v) This special treatment was also given to Jews after the migration of Prophet to Madina, when he signed a treaty with the Jews living in the vicinity of Madina and which is known as the treaty of Madina (*mīthāq-e-madīna*). In this written treaty, Jews were called as one with Muslims. They had been given the right to remain in their religion and their acceptance of Islam was not made compulsory.

From political view, this treaty carries a lot of significance but in our view, its religious significance is not less. It expresses the idea to bring *Ahl-e-Kitāb* nearer, so that their good-minded people would be able to understand that Islam, in fact, is a developed form of the religion that they believe in and which has been spoiled by a number of problems with the passage of time and that Prophet Muhammad only rectified those problems. While in Madinah, Prophet did his utmost effort to fully go by the rules of the treaty and that Muslim should not violate any of the rules. Despite Jewish violators of the treaty, Prophet wanted the treaty to remain intact. He kept on consoling the Jews. He was so sensitive about the issue that once one of the companions, while having a dialogue with Jew declared Prophet Muhammad as superior to Prophet Moses which was not liked by Prophet. Montgomery Watt has described in detail the merciful treatment of the Prophet to Jews and how he respected all the doctrines and values that were the part of the Jewish canon law.

We can easily conclude this discussion by saying that in Islam's perception of non-Muslims, those groups are more skin to it that believe in monotheism and on the top of the list are Jews and Christians. In the next chapter we will explain how this distinction is upheld in Islamic law and how wisely Islam has kept the options open for those who have the ability to know the truth of Islam.

ISLAM AND NON-MUSLIMS

The premise that has been developed in first chapter has two parts that have practical implications for us today. First, non-believer (*Kāfir*) is a special term of the Islam which applies to a group that is no where found in the world. If indeed, there is such a group or individual is only known to Allah. Since we are unable to know this owing to our limited knowledge, therefore, we have to say that today; there is no "non-believer" in this world. Secondly, non-Muslim are also divided into two groups: those who consider monotheism as the foundation of religion such as *Ahl-e-Kitāb* and those who do not believe in any such foundation such as polytheists. We will attempt to show in this chapter, how the Islamic legal commands are formulated as a result of this distinction regarding non-Muslims and how this difference was acknowledged in the life of Prophet Muhammad.

Islamic Law and *Ahl-e-Kitāb*

It is evident from the Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the Prophet that Muslims, were allowed to maintain relation with *Ahl-e-Kitāb* at family and state level. Certain issues that were altogether prohibited in case of non-believer were allowed in respect of *Ahl-e-Kitāb*. Here we will mention such issues.

Marrying *Ahl-e-Kitāb* Women

Muslims are allowed to marry Jewish or Christian women. It is not necessary for this that the woman changes her religion. Despite being a Jew and Christian, such woman may become a member of Muslim family. Holy Qur'ān allows this kind of marriage in the following words:

> "This day are all things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of Book is lawful unto you yours is lawful to unto them.(Lawful onto you in marriage) are not only

> chaste women, who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time-when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness (Qur'ān 5:5).

This verse also mentions culinary relationship with *Ahl-e-Kitāb* which we will discuss later. In respect of allowing marriage with *Ahl-e-Kitāb* women, certain things are very clear.

(1) This injunction of Holy Qur'ān is general. Every woman who believes in a pre-Islamic revealed religion can marry a Muslim male. It is obvious that this is about Judaism and Christianity. There is no other condition in the verse. An *Ahl-e-Kitāb* woman can be married by a Muslim male, be she a widowed, a divorcee, a spinster or deflowered.

(2) There is no such condition for the woman that she should embrace Islam after marriage. She can live according to her religion and obviously she can worship according to her religion is a Muslim household.

(3) In Holy Qur'ān, the basis of conjugal relationship has been described as love. It means that a Muslim husband must establish a relationship of love with his *Ahl-e-Kitāb* wife. Sharing her grief and giving here all the rights that are given to a Muslim wife is also a perquisite of the relationship. Similarly this relationship would also represent the intimacy of husband and wife symbolized in Holy Qur'ān as dress for each other.

(4) Once a woman is accepted as wife, the in-laws relationships come into existence. In case the wife belongs to *Ahl-e-Kitāb*, such relationship would be established and it is incumbent upon a Muslim to respect such relationships. During the period of companions, the verse was understood in the same manner. As a result, the companions of the Prophet married *Ahl-e-Kitāb* women. For example, one of the wives of S. 'Uthmān, S. Naila, was a Christian. S. Talḥa bin 'Ubaydullāh married a Jewish woman. Similarly, it is mentioned in traditions that S. Ka'b bin Nabīh, S. Ḥudhayfa and S. Mughīra bin Shu'ba either married *Ahl-e-Kitāb* woman or sent a message of marriage to them.

Ahl-e-Kitāb's Food and Slaughtered Animals

In the above mentioned verses of *Surah Mā'ida*, eating with *Ahl-e-Kitāb* at the same table has been declared lawful. We learn two things from this verse. First, Muslim can invite *Ahl-e-Kitāb* on food and can also accept their invitation. Both are allowed to eat each other's meal. Secondly, meat of animals slaughtered by *Ahl-e-Kitāb* is permissible to eat. It means that if a Christian or Jew slaughters an edible animal, it is lawful for Muslims to eat it.

Inviting someone for meal or accepting someone's invitation shows a social relationship. The Holy Qur'ān is clearly telling us here that social relationship with *Ahl-e-Kitāb* can be established. In other words, the verse is not limited to meal. Rather it should be read in a broad social background extendable to trade to trade and other affairs.

As for as the animal slaughtered by *Ahl-e-Kitāb* is concerned, it has overall been considered permissible in our intellectual tradition. However, jurists have differed regarding it. For example:

1. *Hanbalis* and *Hanafis* think that if the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* mentioned God's name at the time of slaughter, it is lawful. Otherwise it is not. This is exactly in line with the teaching of Islam and it is equally applicable to Muslims as well. If a Muslim slaughters an animal without mentioning Allah's name, it would not be lawful to eat. It means this condition has no concern with Muslim or *Ahl-e-Kitāb*, rather it is concerned with an injunction of religion. It should be clear here that in the law of *Ahl-e-Kitāb*, mentioning Allah's name at the time of slaughter is compulsory.

2. According to *Shafis'* if the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* mention any name other than Allah, then slaughter would be unlawful. But slaughter would be lawful.

3. In the opinion of *Mālikis*, the slaughter of *Ahl-e-Kitāb* is lawful if they don't mention Allah's name.

This difference of our jurists does not revolve around the point whether the slaughter of *Ahl-e-Kitāb* is allowed or not.

They all consider it lawful. However, the nature of the problem changes with the change in the way of slaughter is done. The difference is in the interpretation and not the subject matter.

Muslims and non-Muslims: The Age of Prophet and his Companions

Holy Qur'ān and other sources show that the relationship of case (*da'wah*) between Muslim and *Ahl-e-Kitāb* had been established during the Makkan period (Fazal-ur-Rehman: *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, p.164). The Holy Qur'ān warned the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* to fulfil their promise and believe in the new Prophet whose name had also been mentioned in their sacred Books: (Qur'ān 16:91,92) After coming to Madina, Prophet Muhammad had to deal with the Jews of Madina in a special way. Without their co-operation it seemed pretty difficult to lay the foundation of a sound state. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad reached on an agreement with the Jewish tribes after negotiating with them. This agreement is known a treaty of Madina. In the last chapter, we have discussed it in detail. The purpose of repetition here is to highlight the historical background that led to the treaty of Madina.

Treaty of Madina was a sign of special treatment given to Jews by Prophet Muhammad. In the light of Qur'ānic teachings, he showed through his actions that Islam views, *Ahl-e-Kitāb* as separate from other groups and deals with them sympathetically. A number of events in the age of Prophet bear witness that Prophet Muhammad tried to find commonalities between Islam and Judaism, and then considered it appropriate to follow their ways in matters where no revelation had been sent by Allah. This was because Muslims were also treading path that had earlier been treaded by Jews and Christians but who later lost the path. Islam had come to fit the passengers of this path on the right track. In one of traditions of *Bukhārī*, it is said: Prophet used to like following ways of *Ahl-e-Kitāb* in matters where there was no special Divine injunction (*Kitāb Al-Libās, Bāb al-Fiqr*). For example, while the people of Arabia used to part their hair when they combed. On the other hand the Jews did not do so. Allah's Prophet Muhammad adopted the Jewish fashion in this matter. When Prophet Muhammad came to Madina, he knew that Jews fasted on the day of 'Āshūra. He ordered Muslims to fast on that day. Prophet used to stand up when he happened to come across a funeral procession of a Jew.

Prophet Muhammad was careful about things that may have irritated the Jews. Once a conversation between a Jew and Muslim turned into a quarrel. The Jew claimed the superiority of Moses over Muhammad. The Muslim did not like this and they started to fight. The Jew came to Prophet to complain. Prophet said: "Don't put me superior to other Prophets. At Doomsday, all will be conscious less. I shall come in conscious before of all others. At that time, I shall find Moses standing by holding pillar of God's throne. (*Bukhārī,*).

All the righteous biographers of Prophet confess that Prophet did his best to have pleasant relations with Jews and overlooked their despotism. Prominent biographer of the Prophet Montgomery Watt has tried to show that Islam is the continuation of Jew-Christian tradition and has based his thesis on two factors. One, the Prophet wanted to improve relations with the Jews and secondly, his desire to prove his Prophethood by putting his revelation as continuation of previous revelations. Watt is of the opinion that Prophet Muhammad was ready to consider a religion-political alliance with the Jews under which they would not have asked to abandon their religions and believe in Prophet Muhammad as Prophet. This opinion is based on the idea that Allah sent prophets to every community and that Muhammad was sent to Arabs. It is essential for Arabs to believe in Prophet but not for Jews because he was not sent to them. Thus, the Jews, without believing in Muhammad, they could sign a political and religions treaty with Muslim and be considered one *Ummah* just like Prophet declared Jews and Muslims of one *Ummah* in the treaty of Madina.

It is obvious from the opinion that there may be a room for difference but it shows that the biographers of Prophet admit his special dealing with the Jews and *Ahl-e-Kitāb.*

However, it is a lamentable chapter of history that the Jews lost all those opportunities that Islam provided them for a peaceful coexistence. If the opinion about them, held by Qur'ān and the Prophet, transformed later and Muslim were forced to take actions against them, it has very obvious reasons. History stands witness to the fact that after extra ordinary Muslim victory in the battle of Badr and heavy losses incurred by Quraysh, the Jews started feeling anxiety. They thought that if Muslim power keeps on increasing like this, they will be deprived of their political and economic status in Yathrab (Madina). As a result, they started violating the treaty. The first of this type of violation was done by a Jewish tribe Banī Qainuqaʿ which culminated to the battle of Banī Qainuqaʿ (Shawwāl, 2 A.H.) Ibn Hishām and Ṭabarī both narrate the following on Ibn Isḥāq's authority. "Banī Qainuqaʿ were the first Jews who violated treaty between them and the Prophet and fought with Muslim in the period between battle of Badr and Uḥud.

The tension between Muslims and Jews reached its zenith because of an incident. An Ansari woman went to a Jew's shop in Madina's market. Jews did some mischief and showed disrespect for the Muslim woman. A Muslim got furious and killed a Jew. As a result, the Jews killed that Muslim. When Prophet came to know about the incident, he went to Jews and warned them:" Fear Allah lest you get punished like people were punished in the battle of Badr." They replied:" We are not Quraysh. If you challenge us, you will know the real meaning of fighting." This was situation that compelled Muslim to wage war against Banī Qainuqaʿ.

As a result of Muslim activity, Jews were confined to their fort. The siege continued for fifteen days. At last, they admitted their defeat and posed their confidence in prophet's decision regarding them. ʿAbdullah bin Ubay was a fiend of Jews. He recommended that they should be sent in exile. The Prophet accepted this and they exiled to Syria.

This is only one incident. Otherwise the situation had become so critical that Muslims started feeling danger from Jews all the time. The intensity of the situation can be guessed from the idea that one of the Companion of Prophet Talḥa advised that if he dies in the night time during those days, Prophet should not be informed about it lest he comes out at night and meets some accident. Similarly, when Prophet went to Bani Nuḍayr to decide a case of blood money, they conspired to kill him. Prophet came to know this and returned safely from there. (Ibn Hishām. The contacts between Jews and Quraysh during this time were at their full swing.

This is the background because of which Qur'ān opted a strict stance against the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* and Muslims were prohibited to have friendly relations with those Jews. Another reason for this harsh attitude was that Prophet Muhammad expected the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* to take a lead over others in believing in him because it was easy for them to know the truth of Muhammad's Prophethood owing to the resemblances between the basic doctrines of Islam and that of their own religion. We also some to know from Qur'ān that during the life time of Prophet, there was a such a group of *Ahl-e-Kitāb* that deliberately refused to believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad. It was not that they had any valid excuse or they could not understand message of the Prophet. At one place it is said:

> "And when there comes to them a Book of Allah, confirming what is with them-although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without faith-when there comes to them that which they should have recognized. They refused to believe in it, but curse of Allah is on those without faith (*Kāferīn*) (Qur'ān 2:89).

In the same *Sura*, it is said:

> "Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed. From selfish envy, after the truth hath become manifest on to them,

> but forgive and overlook, till Allah accomplished His purpose. (Qur'ān 2:109).

Another place, it is said that they recognize you as they recognize their children (Qur'ān 2:146). These statements of the Holy Qur'ān make it obvious that these were the people who deserve to be called "non-believers. Their reaction on Prophet's invitation was akin to the reaction of polytheists of Makkah. Their crime, indeed, was not that they did not believe in Prophet, it was rather their deliberate refusal to believe. Inspite of this, however, Allah dealt with them specially. With migration of Prophet to Madina, the polytheists were lift with so excuse and they were declared non-believers. On the other, this avenue remained open for the *Ahl-e-Kitāb* even after Prophet's arrival in Madina. The major reason for this was that a number of *Ahl-e-Kitāb* were settled in Madina. Thus, they got more time to contemplate the consequences of disbelieving in Prophet Muhammad.

Holy Qur'ān is very stern about these non-believing *Ahl-e-Kitāb* but, on the other hand, we see that Qur'ān is very lenient about some Christian groups and they are mentioned in a voice that leads us to feel a different type of relationship. For instance, it is said:

> "Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans, and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say: "we are Christians"; because amongst these are men devoted to learning, and men who are renounced the world, and they are not arrogant." (Qur'ān 5:82).

At other place it is said:

> "And We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him (Jesus) compassions and mercy."(Qur'ān 57:27)

A problem arises here which is important to understand. In *Sura Mā'ida*, Allah says that Christians are best suited friend for Muslims but at other place in Qur'ān Muslims are prohibited to befriend with *Ahl-e-Kitāb*. In this regard, three places are worth-mentioning:

In *Sura Āl-e-'Imrān*, it is said:

> "Let not the believers take for friends or helpers un-believers rather than believers; if any do that, in nothing will be help from Allah." (Qur'ān 3:28)

In Sura Maida, it is said:

> "O ye who believe take not the Jews and Christians for your friends and protectors; they are friend and protector to each other. And he amongst you that terms to them (friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust."(Qur'ān 5:51).

Same words are also used in *Sura Nisā*. The problem that we confront here is that on the one hand, Allah allows marrying *Ahl-e-Kitāb* woman which necessarily means establishment of social and love relationship. Moreover, Christians are declared best for friendship. But, on the other hand, friendship with them is prohibited in strong words. Is it not a contradiction?

In our view, if the above mentioned verses are understood in the light of our discussion of Prophet and Messenger and the definition of non-believer in Chapter 1, this contradiction evaporates.

The verses that have been mentioned above, the first two are concerned with non-believers while the third verse is concerned with Jews and Christians. If these verses are read together, it becomes quite clear that the Jews and Christians that have been mentioned in *Sura Maida* are a special group that turned non-believer. It means that they knowingly refused to accept the truth and Allah Himself informed Muslims of their crime. Otherwise, they had no way to know it. Therefore, this injunction is specific to the Christians and Jews of the time of Prophet and since no such group exists now, there is no reason to generalize this injunction.

The second thing that we learn from these verses is that this prohibition of friendship is conditioned by they words "with the exclusion of believers" Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī has commented on it in the following words: "The condition makes it obvious that doing good, justice and benevolence to the non-combating non-believers is not prohibited because Islam instructs to display these qualities for all the members of humanity. Muslims are also allowed to sign political and economic treaties provided they don't go against believers" (*Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*).

A conditional injunction cannot be taken in the general sense. This point can be further elucidated from the Holy Qur'ān. In *Sura Tawbah*, Muslims are prohibited to befriend with their fathers and brothers but this prohibition is conditional. The Qur'ān says:

> "O ye who believe, take not for protectors your fathers and your brothers if they loved in fidelity above faith, if any of you do so, they do wrong." (Qur'ān 9:23).

This verse tells us that an ultimate relation with father or brother is prohibited only when they prefer disbelief over belief. On the removal of condition, the injunction also becomes invalid. It means that after this, the friendship becomes lawful and even compulsory under the law of nature.

This whole discussion leads us to the conclusion that the general injunction about Jews and Christians is that we can have social relations with them and these relations can be that of love and proximity. The Christian and Jews with whom Muslims should not befriend were non-believers. They were the Christians and Jews who knowingly and deliberately refused to believe in the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, this injunction is specific with the time of Prophet and cannot be applied on any other period. Similarly, the condition of "with exclusion of believers" makes it clear that friendship was prohibited because that was against the interest of believers. Muslim's social boycott of them is in response to their attitude towards Muslims and should not be general believer of Muslims. The special treatment of Jews and Christians that started in the time of Prophet Muhammad continued till the later period when they were given the opportunity to live on after the punishment of the polytheists.

The most important source of information about Prophet's life is Holy Qur'ān because it is the story of Prophets' mission.

Till here, we have explained the nature of relationship between Muslims and *Ahl-e-Kitāb* with reference to Holy Qur'ān. If we take into account other evidence regarding this relationship in the time of Prophet, the following pictures merges.

1. Since Prophet Muhammad came as a Divine Court of God, so he informed his addressees of the consequences of disbelieving him. This aspect of relationship is obviously specific with him.

2. At social level, prophet and his companions had pleasant relations with people. We know that during the Makkan period, despite bitter opposition, people used to keep their valuables with Prophet. He used to treat people kindly and once he gave alms to a Jewish family. The mother of believers S. Ṣafyā (Prophet's wife) gave an amount of the three thousand rupees to her Jewish relatives as charity. During the life time of prophet. S. "Umar sent a gift for his polytheist brother while Prophet himself allowed some of his companions to have good relationship with their polytheist parents. In some of the commentaries of Qur'ān, it is said that when some companions stopped the assistance that they used to give to their polytheist relatives, Allah revealed a verse in Qur'ān (Qur'ān 2: 272) saying this spending as better for them. (*Sīrat-ul-Nabī,* Syed Sulaymān Nadvī, vol. 6 pp 293-4).

3. Prophet signed treaties with Jews. The most famous of them is known as the Treaty of Madina. This is a known historical fact that Prophet respected all the treaties and if any treaty was broken, the responsibility completely rested with the second party.

4. He also fought battles with his opponents but those were imposed on him. He treated all, from prisoners of war to the lords of opponent-gently and announced mass forgiveness at occasion of victory of Makkah.

As for as the period of Companions and especially rightly guided Caliphate is concerned, we have already mentioned that in principle, this was an extension of the Prophethood. Therefore, the issue of conquest and revolt (especially in the period of first Caliph) is concerned with Divine law. In respect of relation with non-Muslims, Muslims treated them in a good way and respected their religious freedom, both at state and civil society level. The Companions always took care of the non-Muslim citizens of the state in the light of instructions given to them by the Prophet in his last days. The treaty between Muslims and Christians of Ḥīra during the reign of S. Abū Bakr tells us how the Companions followed Prophet's instructions. Here are the words of the treaty: "Their temples and Churches would not be demolished. No such palace would be destroyed where they take refuge in case of attack from an enemy. Neither the playing of drum would be banned nor the bringing out the cross on the occasion of festival" The rate of *Jizya* was quite low. Quite often people were exempted from it because of one reason or the other. For example, from among the 7000 Christians of Ḥīra, 1000 had exempted from *Jizya*. For others its rate was 10 Dirhams per year. The state took the responsibility of disabled and poor non-Muslims. (*Kitāb al-Kharāj*) on the social level Muslims used to take care of non-Muslim, for instance, it is sated about some Companions like Abū Maishra and "Umar bin Sharīel that they used to help Christians priests with charity (*Sīrat al-Nabī*, vol 6, page 293).

During the reign of S. "Umar, this tradition persisted. All the social and legal differences between a Muslim and non-Muslim were removed during his reign. For example, if a Muslim killed a non-Muslim, *Qiṣāṣ* was taken. A person from Bakr bin Wyle tribe killed a Christian and the killer was banded over the family of the killer who killed him. Once the fields of Syria *Zimmi* were destroyed in a military campaign. S. "Umar paid him the compensation worth ten thousands from the state coffers. During the reign of S. Ali, though the state was in turmoil, the non-Muslim citizen of the state did not face any problem from the state or the Muslim citizens. He wrote a letter to one of his governor saying "their living in the country is more liked by me than their leaving. I don't like that they become poor and helpless, unable to play any role in the welfare of the state. (*Tarīkh-e-Islām*, Shāh Muʿīn-ud-Dīn Aḥmad, vol-I, page 382). During the reign of S. Muʿāwiya, the tradition of tolerance and good behaviour continued. In S. "Umar's reign, a mosque was built near the Church of John. S. Mauwia wanted to include the Church in the mosque in order to extend the latter. The Christians did not agree with the idea and it was then given up. Similarly, he assigned important official responsibilities to non-Muslims under his government (*Tarīkh-e-Islām* vol-II, page 33)

Muslims and non-Muslims: Later Periods

We should be clear about later periods that this is the history of Muslims and not Islam. As a number of deviation entered the religion is term of collective issues, the matter of Muslim non-Muslim relation can not be said to represent the ideal behaviour that Islam taught to its followers. Inspite of this, it is a fact that non-Muslim enjoyed the same rights that the Muslims enjoyed. The period of ʻUmar bin ʻAbdul ʻAziz during the Ummayid reign is considered to the ideal. The relations with non-Muslims were excellent during this time and the traditions of Prophet's companions were revived. The way non-Muslims were treated in Andalus is a golden chapter in the history of humanity and is recorded in every authentic book of history. The intellectual tradition that developed among Muslims during the later period tells us about the Muslims treatment of non-Muslim. Business and other relations with non-Muslims have been under discussion by our jurists in this period and general behaviour of jurists is that they respect the non-Muslims as individuals. For instance, *Hanbalis* consider business partnership with non-Muslims as lawful. Non-Muslims can be partners to each other, even in the business like alcohol and pork. It was a period of the codification of jurisprudence when Muslim's were ruler in the world and they viewed things from this vintage point. In a changed world today, we would have to find new styles of thinking.

SOME CLARIFICATIONS

In the previous chapters teachings regarding non-Muslims specially *Ahl-e-Kitāb* have been explained and an effort has been made to see the Muslim non-Muslim relation in different periods of history especially under the Muslim rule. It has also been suggested that the Muslims attitude towards *Ahl-e-Kitāb* in the later periods is not a standard in itself but deserves to be assessed in the light of religious teachings.

Here we will analyze some of the practical problems that rise as a result of Muslim non-Muslim relations and would try to solve them in the light of ideas put forward in the previous chapters.

1. *Zimmis*, Covenanter and Islamic State

One of the major problems in Muslim non-Muslim is about the non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic State. What is their status as citizen of an Islamic State?. Do they have the equal rights with Muslims? In classical *Fiqh* literature, such non-Muslim are divided into two groups.

Zimmi: Non Muslim who become the citizen of an Islamic state as a result of Muslim occupation of non-Muslim area.

2. Asylum: The Citizen of a non-Muslim state who are temporarily living in an Islamic state. Our jurists further divide such non-Muslims into two groups:

(a) Non-Muslims who are citizens of another Muslim state that has good relation with the other Muslim state where they are currently living. The term used for this is "*Dār-ul-"Ahd* or *Dār-us-Ṣulh*". The rulers and citizens of such state are called "*Mu'āhidūn*".

(b)Non-Muslims of a state that is at war with a Muslim state. The technical terms used for it is *Dār-al-Ḥarb*.

The citizens of the "*Dār-us-Ṣulh*" can freely come and live in an Islamic state. However, they need to seek "*Amā*". In contemporary scenario "*amān*" can be called political asylum. Offering asylum in an Islamic state is not a difficult task. Besides the ruler of state and other officials, a common citizen of Islamic state, male or female can give asylum to any one. Even no written document is necessary for it. Just saying that a certain person is under one's asylum is enough. After this all the rights of that person are guarded. The person can go any where in the state, do business, worships and can manage for the education of his/her children according to his/her religion. If he wants to become the citizen of this state, he/she has the right to do so. If this person passes away while he is staying in this country, his/her belongings such as property and wealth would be handed over to his/her relatives living in "*Dār-ul-'Ahd*" or "*Dār-al-Ḥarb*".

The rights of *zimmies* are more than this. They can devise an autonomous system for them. The can preserve their religions, traditions and ways and transmit those traditions to their next generation. They can have their own judicial system and in case of dissatisfaction with that, they can consult the state institutions.

The state, in return for the defence of these rights, demands *Jizya*. *Jizya* is a tax that a Muslim state collects from its non-Muslim citizens but its rate is not fixed. A state can decide the rate according to its own discretion. The rule that has to be observed in this regard is that people are not wronged. For instance, during the 'Abbāsid period, the rate of *Jizya* was 48 Dirhams annually. It should also be noted that *Jizya* is imposed on adult males. Women, Children and religious leaders are exempted from this tax.

In our classical literature, extraordinary care has been advised in respect of *zimmis*. This advice can be read in the words of Imam Abū Yūsuf that gave to 'Abbāsid Caliph Hārūn-ur-Rashīd. In *Kitāb al Kharāj*, it is sad: "O Leader of the faithful! The people who are guaranteed by your cousin, Muhammad should be treated softly and taken care of. Don't be careless about them so that no injustice is done to them. They should not led burdened more than their capacity and only such amount should be demanded from that is justified. According to our classical *fiqh* interpretations, non-Muslim and are not allowed to participate in the political affairs of the Muslim State. Our jurists are not favour of appointing a non-Muslim as an official of the Muslim state. However, some of them think that a non-Muslim can be assigned a responsibility regarding non-Muslims.

The gist of our classical religious understanding is that Islamic law completely protects the rights of non-Muslims so that they could spend a free life according to their religion and ideology. If this whole discussion, however, is seen in the light of theses that we established in the first chapter, it becomes irrelevant to the period when classical *fiqh* developed. The bases of our discussion are the evidences from the age of Prophet and his companions. We have discussed in detail that whatever happened in Prophet's life time and his Companions reign was a part of Divine plan and it is wrong to derive general results from it. In our view, groups like *Zimmis* exist no more. The non-Muslim citizens of Islamic state today are covenanters. They have not got their status of citizenship because of Muslims conquest of their area. Rather they have freely opted to live there. In other words, they have an agreement with the Islamic state.

The Muslim state has the right to agree on any kind of treaty with a non-Muslim individual or group provided both the parties are satisfied. The responsibility of Muslim state after this is to follow the terms and conditions of the covenant. As it is compulsory for an individual to respect his/her agreements, it is also same for the state. Holy Qur'ān says:

> "And fulfil every engagement, for every engagement inquired into (On the day of Reckoning."(Qur'ān 17:34).

In one of the tradition, Prophet said: "on the day of Judgment, I will be a contender against a person who either oppressed his covenanter or violated his rights or burdened him beyond his capacity or took any of his properties against his will" (*Abū Dā'ūd*, 3-52). A covenanted group should enjoy all those rights that have been mentioned in the covenant. However, certain things are apparent. For example:

(1) Their life, wealth and honour will fully be provided.

(2) The deprived segments of the group will be projected with the basic needs of life.

(3) Their personal and religious matters will not be interfered by the state and they will be fully free in this regard.

(4) Their places of worship will be protected.

(5) They will have the right to participate in the election of public representatives.

(6) They will have the right to preach their religion in a civilized manner.

A Sizeable group of Muslim intellectuals does not allow non-Muslims to preach in an Islamic state. In our view, such opinion cannot be supported on religious grounds. They can preach their religion but it would be in such a manner which is allowed by law and civilization. Influencing one's opinion using wealth or power is lawful neither legally nor ethically. Therefore, if a group exploits the poverty of masses for the cause of religious preaching, it can be stopped legally. This is equally applicable to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Even Muslim group cannot be allowed to preach in a way that is illegal or unethical.

As for as the non-Muslims living in a Muslim state temporarily are concerned, they have the same rights that have been decided for them in the contemporary international law. Conditions such as visa and others of the same nature that are applied on non-Muslim citizens in the world would be applied in respect of a Muslim state. An Islamic State, however, can make legislations in this regard. For example, if the state wants to exempt another state's citizen of the visa or wants give them any special privilege, it has the power to do so.

With reference to treaties, we have two historical analogues: One from the age of Prophet and the other from the modern history. As the head of the Islamic state of Madina, Prophet Muhammad signed a treaty with the Jews of Madina. Under this treaty, the Jews accepted the citizenship of Islamic state with certain conditions. Their status was that of a covenanter.

So, the Prophet always respected this treaty. When the other party violated the terms of the treaty, Muslims automatically got released from the treaty.

The other example is that of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan who acknowledged the rights of non-Muslims in the newly established Islamic state of Pakistan. It was an agreement of the state with the non-Muslims. Now it is responsibility of every government of Pakistan to respect this treaty.

(2) War Against non-Muslims

In respect of war against non-Muslims, two things are important.

1. The declaration of war is the right of the government. No individual or group of an Islamic state has the right to declare war against any state or group of another state. In other words, Islam does not entertain any concept of private *Jihād*. If an individual or group thinks that on certain occasion, war has become necessary against non-Muslims and the rulers are not fulfilling their responsibility, they can draw the attention of the government towards this but they can not take the responsibility on their shoulders. This is pretty clear from the religious texts. Detail is not possible to be given here but we will point out certain issues briefly.

(a) The first time, Prophet Muhammad was permitted to do *Jihād*, when he had established a state in Madina after migration (Qur'ān 22: 39-40). Against the oppression of the people of Makka for 13 years Allah asked His Prophet to be patient.

(b) According to the known history of Allah's Prophets no Prophet of Allah fought wars without becoming ruler of state. Jesus Christ could not establish a government, so he could not reach the stage of *Jihād*. The New Testament does not contain any injunction about *Jihād*. Similarly, the lives of Prophet Noah, Shoaib, Ibrahim and many others haves no mentioned of Jihād because of they never ruled as state.

(c) Prophet Moses was allowed to fight when he had succeeded bringing the Israelites out of Egypt towards an independent area. Since he established a government, we find the injunction of *Jihād* in Old Testament (Deuteronomy 20:1-20).

(d) The teaching of Prophet Muhammad also tells us that *Jihād* is only the responsibility of the government. He said: “The ruler of Muslims is their cover. He is followed in fighting and people find shelter behind him”.

(e) Our jurists, too, hold the same opinion. In *Fiqh-us-Sunnah*, it is said “third type of *Kifāyah* duties is that in which the presence of ruler is compulsory such as *Jihād* and establishment of *Ḥudūd*. This is because this is the sole privilege of the ruler. An individual does not have the right to establish *Ḥadd* on any other individual.

The Qur'ānic verses about *Qitāl* (especially in *Sura Tawba*) are related to the Divine plane of God specific to the Messenger and deriving any general principle from those verses is not right.

3. We don’t need any argument to prove that if a non-Muslim country attacks a Muslim country or nation, Muslims have the right to defend themselves and fight in response. Defensive war or *Jihād* is unanimously held lawful by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Another form of *Jihād* has been allowed by Islam and this is to counter the oppression and tyranny of a nation over other. The situation has arisen a number of times in this world that transgresses the geographical boundaries of other nations, oppressed those state’s citizen and cause turpitude in word. Allah’s way in this regard is that He does not allow such nations to go beyond certain limits. He brings forth a counter power. Qur'ān expresses this idea in the following words:

> “Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques, in which name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure.”22:40).

For the completion of Allah's way, even a Muslim government can stand up to the cause of stopping on country's oppression. However, this should be clear that the purpose of this is not to occupy a piece of land but to end the tyranny. Two other points should also be evident here. A government can only take such step on when it has enough military power to stop the oppressing force. Secondly, if the government asks the general public to participate in the war, it becomes compulsory for them to respond affirmatively.

3. No war can be fought to dominate Islam politically. It means that dominating Islam by using power was only limited to the period of Prophet. Muslims can invite others to Islam but this all depends upon the address if he/she accepts the invitation or not. Dominance of Islam through war is not allowed now.

Non-Muslims and the World Hereafter

To say certainly about a Muslim or even non-Muslim's treatment in the hereafter is not possible for a human nor is it his/her status. One of the established rules regarding God's will is that the decides matters on the basis of the intentions. As no person has the power to know other's intentions, so he/she cannot say with finality that one will go to heaven or hell. We should avoid passing on value judgments regarding this matter.

Sometimes proofs are presented from some verses of the Holy Qur'ān is this respect which are not correct. For instance, Allah says in the Holy Qur'ān:

> "Those who reject (Truth) among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists will be in Hellfire, to dwell therein (for aye). They are the worst of creatures. (Qur'ān 98:6).

So understand this verse correctly, we would have to repeat what we have said previously regarding the definition of "non-believer." Non-Believer is one who refuses to believe knowingly and deliberately without any excuse. This is only in Allah's knowledge to decide. The people who are said non-believer by Qur'ān are those that were in the times of Prophet. Giving a general meaning to this is not correct. Those who refused to believe after they knew the truth in post-Prophet Muhammad, would also be considered in the same account but we have no touchstone to know this, we will call them non-Muslims rather than non-believers and leave their end in the hereafter to God. Now whatever way we deal with them on account their being non-Muslims would mainly be concerned with the worldly affairs. If we understand all the verses in Qur'ān regarding non-believers in this perspective, we will be helped in forming a general opinion about non-Muslims. Consequently; we would have a better understanding of contemporary problems.

Relations with non-Muslims: Basic Principles

Culturally, Muslim non-Muslim relations can take following forms:

1. Mutual relation of a Muslim state and its non-Muslim citizen.
2. Social relation of Muslims and non-Muslims within an Islamic state.
3. Relation between Muslims of an Islamic State and non-Muslim of other states.
4. Relations of Muslims of non-Islamic State with the non-Muslims.
5. Relations of a non-Muslim government and its Muslim citizens.

The first of the above form has been discussed in detail in the earlier part of the chapter. Here we will talk about the remaining forms.

> In an Islamic society, socially Muslims and non-Muslims have no difference. Both can have the same type of social relationship as exists between two Muslims. However, they have the right to abstain from certain things in accordance with the demands of their respective religions. For example, a Muslim male is allowed to marry in Ahl-e-Kitāb women but it's not allowed for a Muslim woman to do the same. Therefore, this would be kept in mind in his child's social relationship. Similarly, if a Muslim

thinks that this social religious association may be effected by going to non-Muslim's religious functions or on the other hand, a non-Muslim thinks in the same way for his children, both have the right to stop their children from attending such functions.

This kind of prohibitions is concerned with human rights. It means that we should make it sure that a Muslim or a non-Muslim should be free to choose whatever he/she deems appropriate for himself/herself. An external pressure can not force them to make or break any social relationship. However, there is a basic difference between a Muslim and a secular society. A Muslim society is very sensitive about its Muslim identity; therefore, it may impose certain restrictions on its Muslim citizens in respect of their relationship with non-Muslims. A secular society gives a Muslim woman the right to marry a non-Muslim male which is not a proven right in a Muslim society. Since this is an issue that requires legislation, state also becomes a stake holder at one stage. For example, if a Muslim woman who lives in a Muslim Society wishes to marry a non-Muslim and seeks help of the court, the court may say that there is no room for it, if she persists on her Islamic identity. However, if she does not persist on her Islamic identity and Islamic law does not apply on her, she can marry but after that she should not claim those rights that are the privilege of a Muslim citizen.

There are some other restrictions of this type that a Muslim society imposes on its Muslim members in their relationships with non-Muslims. Apart from those, a Muslim can have every type of social relationship such as trade, friendship with his non-Muslim countryman. In classical Muslim societies, Muslims used to have trade and other relations with non-Muslims. Therefore, our jurists have discussed the ways; Muslims can have trade relations with non-Muslims. Summarizing the opinions of jurists regarding trade relations of Muslims and non-Muslims, Syed Jalāluddīn 'Umrī writes: "Business partnership with a non-Muslim is considered unlawful by Imām Shāfiʿī but it is allowed in Hanbali jurisprudence. Prohibiting the partnership, Abdullah bin ʿAbbās argues that their business involves usury which unlawful in Islam. Those who consider this partnership lawful argue that a Muslim's effective partnership in business may keep it usury free. A non-Muslim's wealth in itself is not impure because Prophet had dealing with them. It means that partnership is allowed if the business does not involve unlawful commodities. ("Social Relations with non-Muslims", *Taḥqīqāt i Islāmī*, Aligarh, July–September 1995).

Interest is unlawful in Islam but the situation today is that it runs like blood in the veins of Muslim state's economy. It is difficult for any Muslim to have a riba-free business. Therefore, in the presence of this essential evil, we cannot make an argument to stop Muslims having business partnerships with non-Muslims. However, if a non-Muslim deals in an unlawful business such as selling wine, a Muslim should avoid partnership in such a business.

> Muslims citizens of an Islamic state can have the same type of relations with non-Muslim citizens of other states that he has with non-Muslim of his own country. They would have to respect the laws that apply on their in respect of two country's bilateral relations. No additional restriction can be imposed on them apart from this.
>
> A Muslim living in a non-Muslim state can have every kind of social relations with his non-Muslim countrymen. This is incumbent upon them to take care of their religious identity. There are democratic societies almost everywhere in the world. Therefore, they would have all the basic rights of a citizen that others have. The laws of these countries don't stop them from anything but if they are sensitive about their religious identity, they would have to voluntarily impose some restrictions upon themselves. We have mentioned there restriction previously in regard to Muslim citizens of Muslim states.
>
> As far as the case of non-Muslim state is concerned, this is the responsibility of Muslims citizens to respect the laws of this

state. If some of the laws infringe upon their religious identity, they should think to seek the help of the court in order to get remedy. If it is not possible, they should see if the existing law forbids them from fulfilling such responsibilities that are of basic nature religiously and legally. If this is the case, they should move to another Islamic country. Otherwise, they should continue living there under the principle of concession (*Rukhṣah*) and accept the restriction willingly. However, they should respect the law of the state.

A few general things regarding Muslim non-Muslim social relationship should be kept in mind.

The environment of social relation among the people of diverse religions that the democratic societies of Europe and America offer, is to a large extant the same that Islam wants to promote. An individual has the freedom to have the relationship with the followers of other religions that he/she likes. We can adopt that environment with the addition of one thing. A Muslim society can impose certain restrictions on its citizens that are essential for the survival of its religious and civilization body. If the non-Muslim are well-organized as a community and are sensitive about their religious identity, then the community has this authority to decide its religious matters. The community can also establish courts to settle family disputes.

The real relationship between a Muslim and a non-Muslim is that of a preacher and his addressee. Being the bearers of the last revelation of Allah, it is the responsibility of Muslims to spread this good message further according to their social circle and ability. This relationship would always exist whether they are residents of a Muslim or non-Muslim country. This relationship has its own demands which must be taken into account:

1. A preacher should love his addressees. If this is not the nature of relationship, the link of preaching cannot be established. The preaching of Islam means that you want to save your addressee from eternal loss in the hereafter. It is evident that this is well-wishing and it leads to love. The role

model of our Prophet guides us in this respect. Holy Qur'ān says that Prophet was keen that people should embrace Islam. He used to pray for his enemies on hearing abusive words because it was the demand of the well-wishing that a Prophet has for his nation. It is not appropriate for a Muslim to display an attitude of hatred and antagonism towards non-Muslims.

2. The style of preaching should always be polite. The ethical demands in this respect should be kept in view. Holy Qur'ān says:

> "Invite all to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. (Qur'ān 16:125)

Preaching does not mean polemics. This is not to let down the others but you wise that they should come to believe what is good for them. This purpose can only be achieved when discussion proceeds with arguments and with a sense of sympathy and well-wishing.

3. Preaching only means conveying the message and not forcing others to believe. When you have communicated your view in polished manner and argumentatively, you have been relieved of your responsibility. Now it is for the addressee to accept or reject. We come to know from Holy Qur'ān that the guidance towards the right path is a matter between God and man. Guiding some one towards the right path and punishing some one on not being guided is beyond a human being's jurisdiction. Allah said to the Holy Prophet:

> "Thy duty is to make (the Message) reached them; it is our part to call them to account."(Quran 13:40)

4. While preaching, if one has to criticize the doctrines and beloved personalities of others, one must be careful and talk about them in such a style that others don't get offended or they are not hurt. A follower of a religion has bias for it and feels devotion for the sacred personalities. Holy Qur'ān dislikes that the false gods of others be abused while preaching. In Sura An'ām, it is said:

"Revile not ye those whom call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance."(Qur'ān 6:108)

This relationship of preacher and addressee forbids such a bias for social relations between Muslim and non-Muslims which leads to the annihilation of the difference in their worldly status. They can live together in a Muslim society just like they live in secular society.

Both are equal in view of law and state. It, at some occasion, they come to develop a quarrel, a Muslim who is a citizen of Muslim state has not been given the right to take law into his hands. He should have to refer the case to the court that is the authority to settle the dispute between the two. Similarly, no Muslim group has the right to attack a non-Muslim group causing them harm. If a Muslim harms a non-Muslim in a matter that is lawful according to his own religion, he would have to pay the damages. For example, if a non-Muslim sells pork and a Muslim destroys it, the later would have to compensate the loss. In *Hidāya*, (a basic book of Hanafi jurisprudence) it is said that implementation of virtue by force is the responsibility of the government. The responsibility of the others is to advise orally. Imam Abū Ḥanīfa is of the view that if a Muslim owns musical instruments and another Muslim destroys them considering them illegal; he would also have to pay the damages.

If the Muslims have some grievance towards non-Muslim state, it should not affect the non-Muslims who are their countrymen. For example, if a Muslim and a Christian country are in a state of war against each other, the social relations of Muslims with the Christian citizens of their country should remain as in the time of peace except that the loyalty of a non-Muslim comes under discussion. Even in this case the matter would be referred to the court and not decided by the citizens by themselves.

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

We made an effort, in the previous chapters, to understand the issue of Muslims and non-Muslims relation theoretically.

We have discussed how our religion guides us in this regard. We shall try, presently, to take up this issue in practical terms and see how we can apply the principles highlighted in previous pages, to our contemporary relations with the non-Muslims. The first thing we ought to know in this regard is the nature of present day scenario. Moreover, we have to understand what to do in those circumstances.

International Scene at a Glance

When we have a look at the various societies in the world today, we will everywhere find non-Muslims living side by side with the Muslims. It is very difficult to find any exception in this context where Muslims, in majority or minority, are not living with non-Muslims.

Considering politically, the dominant nations in the world are non-Muslims. Consequently, it is not Islam or any other religion that makes up the foundation of state or society. Except Islam none of the contemporary religions contain any political movement. True, we face religious arguments with reference to the geography and formation of Israel, but from these arguments only state of Jews follows and not "Jewish State". All the secular governments in the contemporary world are being run by non-Muslims. Whenever Muslim nations are targeted by the activists of these governments, this is interpreted as non-Muslim resurgence against Muslims. This very interpretation resulted in new global polarization known today as "Civilized world vs. Terrorism". In our opinion, we have to comprehend these two facts along with all their implications in order to understand Muslim-non-Muslim relations in the contemporary context.

We begin with pluralistic societies. It is due to this social interaction that the followers of every religion can communicate their point of view with arguments to others. This opportunity is equally available to Islam. The Muslims can take advantage of this situation in two ways. Either they can refuse the others the right of adopting any religion of their choice. Second, recognizing the said right of others, they can establish relations with them on the basis of mutual respect. As far as the former opinion is concerned, it is out of question in any civilized society. Moreover, to go for this opinion is to be unable to understand the Divine Scheme according to which Allah almighty has left it up to people either to accept or reject Islam. Our whole prerogative is just to convey the Divine message. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), was also advised by the Holy Qur'ān that his only responsibility is to convey the message and that it is not his duty to force people to change their religion. Now, we have shown that the *Jihād* performed by the Holy Prophet and the injunctions about non-Muslims are related to the Law of Prophethood and it is inappropriate to infer any general commandment from them. As for the practical side of the issue is concerned, it is clear that to go for this option can be disastrous for the Muslims. In this way they can not survive in the societies in which they live as minorities. In view of this fact, the Muslims generally do not buy any such concept and they recognize the right to choose a religion to everyone.

However, Muslims differ regarding the political dimension. According to one opinion, although everyone is free to choose religion, this right does not extend to a non-Muslim nation to rule the world. It is the prerogative unique to Islam.

Granted this opinion, we can find no basis for establishing social relationship with the non-Muslims. If our message to others is that we have planned to destroy their dominance whenever we have power enough to do that, we shall obviously receive enmity in return. It is equally obvious that they will never let us become powerful to disempower them. This opinion has its bases in the political interpretation of Islam. A number of scholars have pointed out the mistake of this point of view and they do not entirely agree with it.

In our opinion, too, this belief is not adequate. In the present scenario, to present this view is tantamount to invite the hostility of the entire world. In view of this, it however gained popularity with the Muslim majority. Even those who share this opinion, favour co-existence between Muslims and other civilizations. It means they recognize others right to rule when that is not against Muslims.

We believe that Muslims should respect international political treaties that came into existence in the form of United Nations charter and they should advocate to all the members of this unity that they should also respect this charter. Whenever there is a malaise in the world, it is the result of deviation from this charter. For example, American attack on Iraq was a violation of this treaty. Therefore, all the countries of the civilized world did not back it and America had to ignore this organization in attacking Iraq. It means that the collective conscience of world does not tolerate any injustice even today.

It is because America is the only world power at present and relations with it, if not understood in the right perspective, may lead to a faulty policy. The general opinion of Muslims about America is that it is a state hostile to Muslims. The other opinion is that this proposition is not correct. America is not an enemy of the Muslims. Being a world power, one of her objectives is to maintain that status. Any power, irrespective of its religion, standing as an obstacle in the fulfilment of this objective, will be treated harshly. In this respect the example of Soviet Union is apt which was not Muslim but since she was a claimant of participation in world sovereignty with America, her destruction was one of the major objective of America until she existed on the globe.

In our view, the second opinion is correct and while formulating any policy, Muslims should keep the same opinion in view. The truth is that with the exception of government own by Prophets and rightly guided caliphs, all the world powers had this value in common.

What to do now?

In the contemporary socio-political perspective that had been described above, Muslims should do the followings:

We would have to review the points of view that emerged in the last century in the name of understanding Islam. The special attention should be paid to works dealing with Muslim-non-Muslim relations. For example, an attempt that has been made here to understand religion from political point of view has led to extremism and political dominance of Islam has been declared as the major objective instead of preaching of Islam. The implications of this interpretation are that it does not lead to moderation in Muslim non-Muslim relations. Therefore, it is necessary that Muslims intellectuals play their role and try to understand religion from fundamental sources anew. This is an essential result of the evolution of Islamic thought. Its purpose is not to defame any our respected figures. Rather it is an attempt is understand Islam according to the demands of a new age just like the attempt our scholars made in their times.

Pluralistic society and the modern advancements in communication have opened up new avenues to present Islam's message to the followers of other religions effectively and methodically. Earlier, Muslim used new technologies successfully. We should keep in view that the general attitude of Muslims would play a vital role in this preaching. Muslims could not maintain their political dominance of the world but if they exploit the new social and communication revolutions properly, they can establish their intellectual dominance. After the end of "political empire" borrowing Mawlānā Wahīd-ud-Dīn Khān's term, we should establish a "*Da'wah* empire" and all the resources for this are available.

The sub-title of the anthology "*Towards a Muslim Theology of Other Religions in a Post-Prophetic Age*" underscores the importance of an other basic insight that informs the shared perspective of the authors. According to their lights, in the "'Post-Prophetic Age" the conditions are different. "For those who come face to face with the founder of a new religion, the lack of alternative choice becomes as it were absolute in virtue of the correspondingly absolute greatness of the Divine Messenger himself. ... But with the passage of time there is inevitably a certain levelling out between the new and the less new." Many of the selections included in the anthology address the implications- conceptual, theological, as well as practical and legal- of this "levelling out". It is the theological position that you take on the question of the religious and cultural Other that determines every thing else that follows, attitudes, behaviour, dealings, agendas relationships etc. It is not only an inter-faith issue; it has far reaching implications for intra-faith dialogue and relations.

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Contributions to the volume include: Frithjof Schuon, Martin Lings (Abu Bakr Siraj ud-Din), Huston Smith, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, William C. Chittick, Joseph Lumbard, Reza Shah Kazmi, Basit Bilal Koshul, Steven Kepnes, Muhammad Suheyl Umar and Khurshid A. Nadim. The collection also presents selections from the great Sufi Master Ibn 'Arabi and the 20th century sage and poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

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